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What America owes to Martin Luther King Jr.

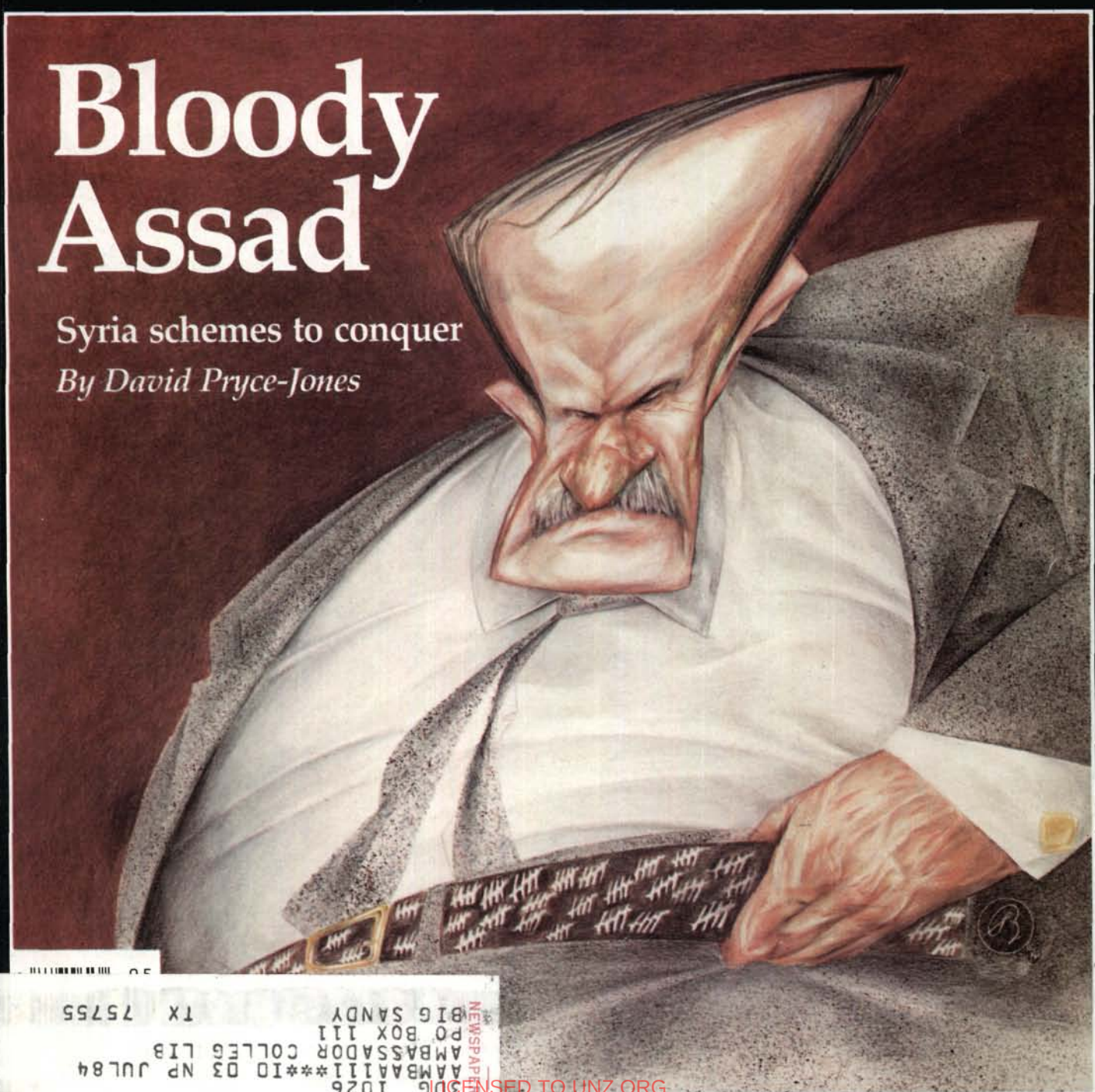
DR. KISSINGER'S CURE • TOM STOPPARD'S ARTIFICIAL HEART • THE END OF REVOLUTION

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Bloody Assad

Syria schemes to conquer

By David Pryce-Jones



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CORRESPONDENCE

GOALS, NOT QUOTAS

To the editors:
Charles Fried's "Questioning Quotas" (TNR, December 26) is sound and persuasive as it applies to quotas, but not as to goals. It is absolutely wrong and reckless to argue that goals and quotas are the same because the one supposedly becomes the other in practice. Some goals programs have indeed been distorted into quota programs—and there are those who want that to be the case. This problem requires greater diligence—and above all greater understanding—rather than throwing out the proverbial bathwater. Most goals programs have operated properly. They have helped. They have not resulted in reverse discrimination. The Reagan Administration is wrong in arguing that in order to avoid quotas it is necessary to outlaw goals. That would gut affirmative action and be very wrong. I hope Charles Fried agrees.

HYMAN BOOKBINDER
American Jewish Committee
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
As Charles Fried says, "Anyone who is dogmatic on the subject of quotas doesn't understand it very well." It's also true that anyone who confuses quotas and goals, as Professor Fried does, also doesn't understand the subject.

To be clear about it, quotas are numerical requirements that must be obeyed. They have been imposed by courts on employers who have been found to have engaged in long-continued, egregious, and purposeful discrimination. Often they have been imposed only after the defendant has failed to recruit and hire members of the victimized class in specified numbers after having been enjoined to do so, calling into question the employer's good faith.

Goals, as used in the federal government's contract compliance program about which Professor Fried writes, are quite different. They are numerical targets, arrived at by determining the proportion of minorities and women having the requisite qualifications in the population from which the employer recruits and hires. They are based on the commonsense expectation that, absent discrimination somewhere in the personnel system, the work force will in time reflect the composition of the recruitment pool. The government requires only that, if the goal so determined is not reached over a period of years, the employer must demonstrate that this has occurred despite good faith efforts to achieve the goal.

Studies of the government's contract compliance program show that it is working, that a large segment of the business community believes in goals and timetables (as they believe in setting sales and production goals), that job qualifications have not generally been lowered but that, on the contrary, more qualified people are turning up as a result of the broader recruitment efforts. Nothing else has been so effective in integrating the American work force or in opening opportunities to women.

Individual liberty is a great American value; so is equality of opportunity. The former is quite secure; we have been practicing it for two centuries. The latter, however, has not yet been fully established and is still in danger. Professor Fried has the shoe on the wrong foot.

ROGER KUHN
Bethesda, Maryland

Charles Fried replies:
Mr. Bookbinder writes that "some goals programs have indeed been distorted in quota programs—and there are those who want that to be the case." So how can it be "absolutely wrong and reckless" to argue that goals and quotas are the same because in practice one becomes the other? One would have to be quite naive not to see that the bureaucratic and political pressures are all in the direction of such a tendency and that proponents of goals "want that to be the case." Organizations faced with vague but potentially devastating government sanctions are moved to treat goals as quotas rather than explain themselves to unsympathetic bureaucrats committed—like traffic cops with tickets to write—to "getting results."

SALVADOR TRUTH

To the editors:
Finally TNR published a meaningful, well-researched, no-nonsense, well-reasoned essay on El Salvador. Christopher Dickey's instructive and intelligent "The Truth About the Death Squads" (TNR, December 26) contrasts sharply with the muddled, reactionary reasoning that, alas, has characterized TNR's approach to El Salvador in particular and to Central America in general.

E. BRADFORD BURNS
Los Angeles, California

J.F.K. DEBATE

To the editors:
Henry Fairlie seems to have missed the obvious in his recent article ("J.F.K.'s Television Presidency," TNR, December 26). He asserts that "the legend of Camelot has faded," but I would argue that the saga continues.

Mr. Fairlie asks, why was so much attention paid to this anniversary of the events of November 23, 1963? But shouldn't we ask, why has the Kennedy family had to endure a continuous invasion of their private lives by the media? One cannot pick up one of those "supermarket newspapers" without seeing front-page stories about the latest Kennedy family romance, scandal, or other such undeserved and needless intrusion. More respected journalists have published articles suggesting that Senator Edward Kennedy might enter the race for the Presidency at the '84 Democratic Convention. Can one really argue that Senator Kennedy's following has not, at least in part, arisen from the legacies left to him by his high-minded brothers?

Mr. Fairlie also claims that President Kennedy agitated the political atmosphere and contributed to the disillusionment that followed. He conveniently neglects to mention the disillusionment was a result of his brutal assassination, the untimely murders of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., as well as the war in Vietnam.

Wasn't the Kennedy Administration a refreshing and badly needed awakening for a nation sound asleep during much of the Eisenhower years? Speaking for myself, Kennedy did indeed exist. And in the words of his younger brother, ". . . the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die."

RICHARD M. MARANO
Waterbury, Connecticut

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FROM WASHINGTON

HOLY MACKEREL, SAFIRE

That lumbering beast, the Washington scandal, is awake again and growling to be fed. Dinner—trembling and cowering and looking very tasty—is to be Charles Z. Wick, head of the United States Information Agency. Flogging the beast vigorously to keep it enraged and hungry is William Safire, conservative columnist for *The New York Times*.

Someone leaked Safire evidence that Wick had been tape-recording his phone calls. Confronted, Wick stupidly insisted that he had never recorded a conversation without telling the other party, then later admitted he sometimes had. Also stupidly, he said the taping had begun in 1983, though it went back to 1981. Newspapers have been ringing the changes on the "secret tapes" story for two weeks. A federal agency is investigating. Two Congressional committees plan hearings. One state is considering criminal charges. In a particularly ominous development, President Reagan has expressed his full support for Wick. All this is standard operating procedure. Meanwhile, Safire hints darkly of more revelations to come.

Wick was wrong to tape his phone calls, and wrong to lie. But the almighty fuss is way out of proportion, and its self-feeding momentum is downright frightening. Safire's motive in branding this vain and silly man as the Wicked Wick of the West is, at best, mysterious.

By all accounts, Wick is a jackass. One of Reagan's California socialite buddies, he's been a repeated embarrassment to his chum. He spent $32,000 on a security system for his rented house, believing himself Washington's second most likely target of a terrorist attack. In the so-called "kiddygate" episode, he gave jobs to children of Administration members and friends, including Alexander Haig, Caspar Weinberger, and William Clark. More recently, he blurted his view that British Prime Minister Thatcher only opposed the American invasion of Grenada because "she's a woman."

Employees and former employees describe Wick as a petty dictator in two senses: first, as a maniacal boss given to comic swaggering and lunatic rages; second, as a man with a dictaphone for a right arm, who likes to record his every passing thought and conversation and then have secretaries type up transcripts. His taping was not "secret" in the sense that he made any attempt to hide the practice. (It's wonderful how many people now recall having warned Wick that the taping was a bad idea.) There's no reason to doubt Wick's assertion that when he failed to alert people to the taping, it was an oversight.

There's a fundamental difference between taping your own conversation and bugging a conversation you're not a party to. The people talking to Wick knew he was listening and knew he could repeat what he heard. Nevertheless, surreptitious taping is a violation of confidence, though Safire's assertion that victims of secret tapes "are left with the feeling of the aborigine who fears that a picture taken of him steals his soul" is a bit theatrical. Richard Cohen of *The Washington Post* is closer to the mark when he argues that what taping steals from you is deniability. When it's on tape, "You can't lie."

If what's at stake here is freedom to lie (not a trivial freedom), maybe we need a bit of perspective on Wick's second transgression: lying when confronted. Imagine how easy it is to panic when William Safire drops by to announce that he's got you by the private parts and is planning to squeeze in the next morning's *New York Times*. Even lesser journalists can have the same effect. For example, I called up Gilbert Robinson last week to ask if he had leaked Wick's transcripts to Safire. Gilbert Robinson was deputy director of U.S.I.A. until last May, when Wick made him the fall guy for "kiddygate" and fired him. He's also an old friend of William Safire. In 1959, they helped organize the famous "kitchen debate"

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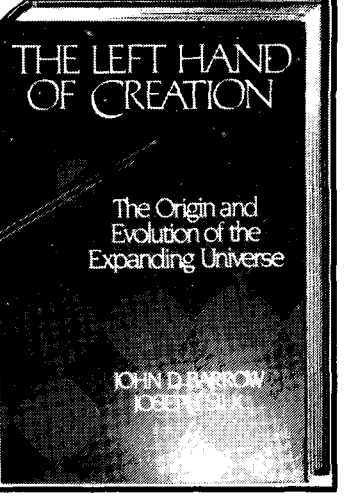

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JANUARY 30, 1984

THE TRUTH IS SOMETIMES BANAL

It snowed in Washington, and the Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America was released. The snow stilled the city; there was an impression of harmony in the nation's capital. Swiftly, however, the snow turned to ice. People moved slowly, cautiously. Nobody looked very far ahead, for fear of slipping. It was not long before it all melted, and Washington was exactly the same.

A reading of the report of the Kissinger Commission leaves one with a calm feeling of consensus. With the exception of American support for the anti-Sandinista guerrillas, which seems to have provoked a dramatic difference of opinion among the commissioners, there is virtually no serious proposition about Central America that is not agreed upon. The crisis is military. The crisis is political. The crisis is economic. The crisis is regional. The crisis is global. As to American policy, there is the same sort of intellectual and political cordiality. The United States should send military aid. The United States should send economic aid. The United States should send social aid. Central America, the report declares, is "a seamless web."

And surely it is. The many trials of Central America are indeed simultaneous. The problem with such an analysis is not that it is false, but that it is general, and a bit banal. All of these bases have been touched before. Indeed, it is becoming the most characteristic feature of the Central America debate to touch them all again. The report of the Kissinger Commission is only more evidence of the staleness of the Central America debate, and of the limitations of reasonableness. ("The United States should encourage the Central American nations to develop and nurture democratic cultures, institutions, and practices. . . .") It is a long way from these platitudes to policy. In the case of a commission, particularly a "bipartisan" commission, this is probably not surprising. Such bodies are not brought into being to break new ground in thought and deed. They are created, rather, for the circumvention of hard choices. The President and Congress cannot choose; the commission reports that they need not choose. Do it all, is the advice. Everybody is right, nobody is wrong. ("But they can't both be right," protests the bailiff in the old joke. "You're right, too," replies the judge.)

Still, the comprehensiveness of the report is probably a little courageous, too. For example, there is now on the President's desk an account of the Salvadoran crisis for which the death squads are deemed fully as much of an obstacle to political and social development as the guerrillas. Indeed, the commission concludes its endorsement of elections as the beginning of "a true political solution" in El Salvador with these sentences:

> Given prevailing conditions in El Salvador, all factions have legitimate concerns about their security. . . . No political efforts at reconciliation can succeed if the Government of El Salvador itself aids and abets violence against its own people. Unless it effectively curbs the actions of the death squads—unless it provides basic security for teachers, editors, and writers, labor and religious leaders, and generally for the free and secure expression of opinion—the political process recommended here will break down.

Now this may sound a bit more like Lane Kirkland and less like Henry Kissinger, but there it is. Moreover, the report goes into sincere detail about the ways in which the F.D.R.-F.M.L.N. might be persuaded to participate in March's election. The Reagan Administration appears to have arrived independently at the brutally belated recognition that the psychopathic right in El Salvador is inimical to American interests too—that our interests lie with the cowed Salvadoran center—and has acted to reverse its indifference to the murderers in uniform. Whether it will also act to open the elections realistically to the guerrillas remains to be seen.

Of course there are also passages of the report that sound more like Henry Kissinger than Lane Kirkland. These have to do with military and strategic considerations. For example: "There might be an argument for doing nothing to help the government of El Salvador. There might be an argument for doing a great deal more. There is, however, no logical argument for giving some aid but not enough. The worst possible policy is to provide just enough aid to keep the war going, but too little to wage it successfully." A few years ago Mr. Kissinger made

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this point in *Public Opinion* magazine in almost the same words. His point is certainly good. There is indeed a war taking place in El Salvador; and it may be one of the political achievements of the commission to have provoked from some of the leaders of the Democratic Party this assent to a fact of Salvadoran life which many Democrats prefer to ignore. The suspension of military aid, or the freezing of it at its present levels, would bring no relief to Salvadoran society; the Leninists who would come to power are not exactly thirsting for social justice. (And they would probably do with the likes of Guillermo Ungo what the Leninists in Nicaragua did with the likes of Edén Pastora.)

STILL, THE MATTER of military aid deserves closer examination. The Kissinger Report provides an excellent (and unwitting) opportunity to confront the real contradiction that cripples El Salvador, which is that the enemy of the army is the army. In one of its novel passages, the commission draws a distinction between humane counterinsurgency and inhumane counterinsurgency, and proceeds to argue that the "intolerable violence upon the civilian population" wreaked by the Salvadoran military is due to insufficient resources. "Without adequate military aid, Salvadoran forces would not be able to carry out the modern counterinsurgency tactics that would keep civilian losses to a minimum." Obviously this is rubbish. The military murderers would do their dirty deeds with bows and arrows, if bows and arrows were all they had; and there are many uses to which a helicopter may be put. The inhumanity that revolts the Kissinger Commission is in the structure of the Salvadoran Army, and in a system of power that rewards sadism. (See "Behind the Death Squads," by Christopher Dickey, TNR, December 26, 1983.) In other words, the reform of the Salvadoran Army is not merely a political necessity, but a military necessity. Its own corruption is part of what stands between it and victory. Which is to say, furthermore, that there will be no military change without a political change. As things stand now, the money that we call "military aid" is going less to an army and more to a secret police. (And our economic aid is frequently diverted by a system of government that the report memorably calls, in a reference to Somoza, "kleptocracy.")

The security chapter begins with the statement: "We ardently wish that there were no need for a security chapter in a report on Central America." Here the great geopolitical gifts of Henry Kissinger are most apparent. For example: "The ability of the United States to sustain a tolerable balance of power on the global scene at a manageable cost depends on the inherent security of its land borders. This advantage is of crucial importance. It offsets an otherwise serious liability: our distance from Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. . . ." This is certainly true. It gives pause to consider the full extent to which American foreign policy and American security policy are all premised on hemispheric peace. (It also gives pause to consider that the Soviet Union is lacking in precisely this strategic luxury.) In the event that the hemisphere becomes hot, the report notes, "we would either have to assume a permanently increased defense burden, or see our capacity to defend distant trouble spots reduced. . . ." This is a legitimate and farsighted concern. Indeed, it may be the final goal of Soviet policy in the region to disrupt Mexico and deprive the United States of the peace here that has underwritten its security commitments elsewhere. And there is still time to act; the day that Mexico may fall is still distant enough to permit us a wide variety of means of prevention. The Kissinger Report is grave, but it is admirably unhysterical. It states that this strategic nightmare may be put off as much by the use of diplomacy as by the use of force. For this reason the commission's lukewarmness to the Contadora group, which appears to be making real progress among all the Central American parties, is hard to understand; it makes its enthusiasm for the renovation of the Central American "regional security system" seem rather like rhetoric.

In fact the security requirement put forward by the Kissinger Commission is worthy of respect. And it is remarkably like what a critic of the Reagan Administration's policy on Central America has called "the Finland option." The United States would tolerate a variety of political and social systems in its hemisphere, but it would not tolerate an alliance between any of these systems and its enemies. Reform and revolution, yes; the Soviet Union and Cuba, no. As the report concludes:

> The general strategic objective that should animate U.S. diplomacy in dealing with the present threats in Central America can be simply stated: to reduce the civil wars, national conflicts and military preparations there at least to the dimensions of the Central American region. As a nation we are certainly not opposed to indigenous reform in Central America. . . . Nor are we threatened by indigenous revolutions that use local resources and appeal to local circumstances. What gives the current situation its special urgency is the external threat posed by the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, which is threatened by massive Cuban military strength, backed by Soviet and other East bloc weapons, guidance and diplomacy, and integrated into the Cuban network of intelligence and subversion.

FOR SUCH A policy to work, however, the United States will have to overcome a twentieth-century habit that has been in part responsible for many of its global setbacks. That is the habit of being spooked by Marxists of all kinds. In fact there are many kinds of Marxists who would welcome the blandishments of American aid and live quite comfortably in friendship with America—who might turn out to be democrats too. It is not enough to be "not opposed" to revolutions in our region. Many of them, even those that are made in the name of a philosophy that would make Alexander Hamilton turn over in his grave, will have to be forthrightly supported. For it is a fact of revolutionary life that suffering societies look outside for help. And they will take what help they can get. Sooner or later the populations of the poor and politically

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wretched nations of the world will try to change their way of life. The Russians will certainly be there with their Mephistophelian bargains. We must be there, too. There is more than one way to fight the cold war.

The Kissinger Commission correctly understands that, as Nestor Sanchez, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Inter-American Affairs, recently wrote, "The hallmark of the Soviet-Cuban effort is opportunism." But the Soviet Union's opportunities are also the United States' opportunities. We may honor our moral and political principles by coming to the immediate assistance of justice against power, and deny our enemies the chance to gain power in the guise of justice. In Latin America, certainly, we have not always conducted ourselves with quite such circumspection. The Kissinger Commission's brief account of the history of American involvement south of our border is somewhat sanitized. Still, as the report repeatedly insists, it is hardly too late.

The report is rife with recommendations. Its most dramatic is the $8 billion proposed for economic assistance for a period of five years, though a subsequent note claims that even more may be needed. In the present political context, the figure may be too fantastic to fly. The Congress will certainly claim that the economy will not tolerate this foreign policy. But here we should speak plainly. It says little about the moral and political seriousness of lawmakers, many of them Democrats, when they scream for social and economic solutions and then fail to provide the funds for them. The renewal of Central America—nothing less is the question at issue—will require an American commitment to a region in ruins whose only precedent would be the Marshall Plan. (Obviously, European democracy and European industrialization made that job easier.) Indeed, if you agree that Central America is profoundly pertinent to American security, and if you believe that the security problem originates in the social problem, then you must be ready with the money that is commensurate with the misery. Otherwise you are high-mindedly carping, interfering with the short-term prosecution of a war, and abandoning the long-term altogether. Unfortunately a great many Democrats seem to fit such a description.

The commission suggests no figure for the increase in military assistance that it seeks, but it is quite scrupulous about the relationship between American military aid and Salvadoran human rights. The commissioners are for certification, though Mr. Kissinger (and two colleagues) dissent somewhat obscurely; they "strongly endorse the objectives" of the certification process, but warn against an interpretation of the process "that leads to a Marxist-Leninist victory in El Salvador." (Ronald Reagan had the nerve to reject this part of the report before he had seen it.) Nor are these the report's only dissenters. Two other members register their belief that the United States should suspend its support to the Nicaraguan *contras*. In the matter of Nicaragua, however, the report is perfectly balanced and lives up to its own standard of "realism." Taking note of the recent Sandinista moves in the direction of a less aggressive foreign policy and a more liberal domestic policy, the report observes that American pressure is at least in part responsible for these things. Moreover, the commission's political and philosophical hostility to the Sandinistas quite clearly is owed only to their alliance with the Soviet Union and Cuba. The report is scathing about Somoza, it understands the legitimacy of the Nicaraguan revolution, it does not exclude Nicaragua from any of the economic and political structures it proposes for the region. We concur in this mixture of hope and determination.

The Kissinger Commission, like the man for whom it is named, does not deserve most of the opprobrium it will cause. After all, not much can be accomplished by meeting three hundred people in nine days of travel. This report is an anthology of accepted wisdom, a "well-informed layman's perspective" (as it calls itself) produced as the result of an "intensive seminar." There is not much it can teach about Central America. There is something it can teach, however, about the United States, which is that all the consensus in the world may change nothing. We've had a commission; the politics and the perplexity remain.

NOTEBOOK

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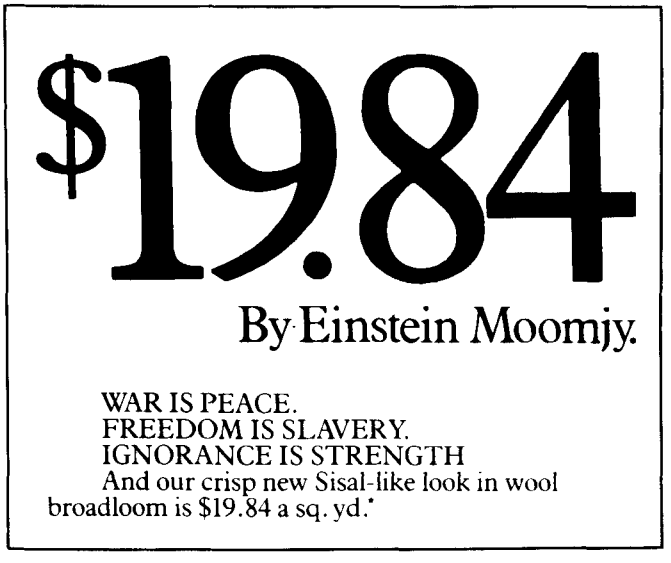
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□ ALESSANDRO PERTINI, the figurehead president of Italy, wants his country's soldiers back from Lebanon. (Of course, a year ago the Italians were probably pleased to be there, just to show they still had soldiers.) Pertini recently charged in a speech that our Marines—and, by extension, his troops—were in Lebanon only "to protect Israel." Now columnist Mary McGrory has quoted him approvingly. But both of them know that the Israelis don't need

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the Marines (who can hardly protect themselves) to protect them. They also know that our troops went in primarily as a stratagem, resisted in Jerusalem, to get the Israelis out. In fact, there was a time when the Israelis were the only forces the Marines were prepared to confront in Lebanon. So why the faking by Pertini and McGrory? It's not very complicated. Since they seem to think (and believe that others think) that protecting Jews would not be an appropriate reason for having troops in Lebanon, they disguise the fact that those being protected are primarily Christians. After all, how would it play at home if Alessandro Pertini and Mary McGrory were to candidly admit that they were urging the removal of troops whose presence may be all that protects many of Lebanon's Christians from death?

□ TWENTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "Stanley Kubrick's new film, *Dr. Strangelove*, is the best American picture that I can remember since Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* and Huston's *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (both 1947). The screenplay is by Kubrick, Terry Southern (whose touch is tartly manifest), and Peter George, and is derived from George's novel, *Red Alert*. A nuclear attack is accidentally launched on Russia; in order to avert retaliation and total war, the American President calls the Soviet premier to warn him that the unintended attack is coming and to help him destroy the U.S. planes. But one plane gets through, drops its megaton message, and detonates the Soviet Doomsday Machine, a thermonuclear device which, once triggered, cannot be untriggered and which will blanket the earth with radioactive material for 93 years. This film is a comedy. It is not a film to please Peace Marchers or Nuclear Disarmers. It does not tell us what we must do to be saved. Nor is it a comfort for those who find snug superiority in irony: from the juvenile insipidities of Carl Foreman on film to the obscenity-decked liberal platitudes of Lenny Bruce in nightclubs. This film says, 'Ban the bomb and they'll find another way. The real Doomsday Machine is men.' " ("Dean Swift in the 20th Century," by Stanley Kauffmann, February 1, 1964.)

The ship of state.

NEW JERSEY BOMBS

LIKE MOST PEOPLE born in New Jersey, I've developed a certain defensiveness about my home state. For years I've suffered jokes about the way our cities should be renamed "Toxic Waste," "Discountville," or "Shopping Mall." I've endured monologues about funding a "Jimmy Hoffa Memorial Off-Ramp" on the Garden State Parkway. I've been subjected to one too many comedians who claim the state is so polluted that residents have begun to measure their ages in half-lives. And this doesn't begin to take into account the humiliation I felt as a child upon learning that the Statue of Liberty's backside faces Hoboken.

As the continuing target of these cheap shots, we New Jerseyites are continually on the prowl for any source of civic pride. And now, at last, we've found one: our namesake, the 57,335-ton battleship U.S.S. *New Jersey*, at present steaming off the coast of Lebanon.

I FOLLOW the exploits of our ship on a daily basis. I've memorized all of her vital statistics, from the eighteen inches of armor plating (strong enough to survive everything but a nuclear attack), to the 1,527 people required to operate the vessel, which was refurbished at a cost of $326 million in 1981, to her famous 16-inch guns (fired 5,212 times during the Vietnam War) which are capable of hurling a two thousand-pound projectile twenty-one miles inland—a payload roughly the equivalent of a fully loaded Chevrolet Impala.

Civic prejudices aside: if the ship is capable of throwing Chevrolets twenty-one miles, why not do the smart thing and actually throw them? What better way to show the people of the Middle East our good intentions? Which do you think is going to win more friends—two thousand pounds of molten shrapnel or two thousand pounds of the finest chrome, glass, and steel Detroit has to offer?

Admittedly, there are those who will complain that the Lebanese are fighting a religious war. But think about the first time you laid eyes on a Chevy Corvette. Wasn't that a religious experience? (It certainly was in the part of Jersey I come from.)

Were the Defense Department actually to follow this policy, America could develop an entire new range of consumer weaponry, including heat-seeking refrigerators, unmanned drone stereo systems, stealth microwave ovens, and singles cruise missiles. General Motors could develop the B-1 Buick, and Chrysler a line of M-X cars. Even Ford could get into the act with a P-51 Mustang convertible.

Naturally, the Russians would follow suit, and I'm sure there would be a crash program in the Kremlin to produce the Backfire Lada, SS-20 dishwashers, and Intercontinental Beluga Caviar. Either way, we will have turned the Middle East into a consumer-oriented economy instead of a military battleground, which may well bring peace and prosperity to the area, creating thousands of jobs for people to repair these items. Admittedly, Lebanon is not Vietnam; but who can imagine what would have happened if we'd dropped hair dryers on Hanoi?

If this plan works in Lebanon, allowing us to leave proudly after having actually improved the area, I can think of another assignment for the New Jersey's 16-inch guns. Let them shell Newark.

BRUCE FEIRSTEIN

Bruce Feirstein is a New York writer working on his first novel.

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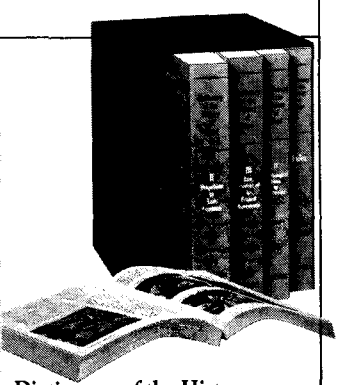

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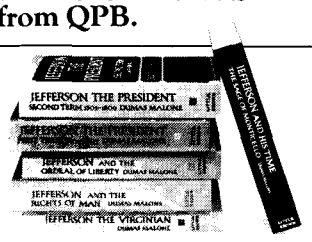
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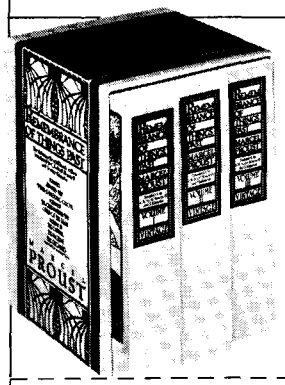

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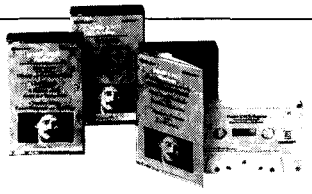

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A legacy of confrontation and conciliation.

CEREBRATING DR. KING'S BIRTHDAY

BY ROBERT WEISBROT

IN HIS belated support for a day honoring Martin Luther King Jr., Ronald Reagan predictably recalled the man as an inspiring—and innocuous—advocate of good will, brotherhood, and harmony. Such a carefully cropped portrait of Dr. King has gained wide popularity, perhaps because it enables the nation to create a comforting icon out of the career of a political iconoclast. Yet the heart of King's legacy was not his teachings as a gentle minister, but his influence as the most skilled protest leader of our age.

Any attempt to free King from myth must begin by emphasizing that though he frequently lauded the country's avowed ideals, he honed his own moral vision on deeply felt grievances against American society. King spent his youth in the Deep South, where he felt both anguish and anger at segregation, "partly because the separate was always unequal, and partly because the very idea of separation did something to my sense of dignity and self-respect." Later, as a seminarian and then as a theology student in the early 1950s at Boston University, he shaped a philosophy of social activism that interwove Christian beliefs and Gandhian tactics of civil disobedience. At the heart of his values, though, there remained a desire, which he shared with other black citizens, to topple a racial caste system sanctioned by law and flourishing on the margins of the American conscience.

King gained influence as an advocate of protest, as his words expressed what a growing number of blacks were already thinking—and doing. In 1954, the year King became pastor of a black Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama, the N.A.A.C.P. won the landmark *Brown* case, in which the Supreme Court overturned legalized school segregation. The following year, just months after King declined to head his local N.A.A.C.P. branch (preferring to spend more time with his family, congregation, and books), a black woman named Rosa Parks defied Montgomery's racial etiquette by refusing to yield her seat on a bus to a white man. When Parks was arrested, black leaders met at King's church, and there chose him unanimously to lead a boycott of the offending bus company. King later wrote that Rosa Parks, who galvanized an entire black community into action, "had been tracked down by the *Zeitgeist*—the spirit of the time." That observation might also be applied to King's own emergence among a generation of confident blacks, impatient with Jim Crow custom and awaiting only the spark to set them against it.

The Montgomery boycott lasted nearly a year and became a symbol of growing black assertiveness in opposing segregation. Its final triumph, in December 1956, admittedly required a mighty assist from the N.A.A.C.P., which persuaded the Supreme Court to void segregation laws for public buses. Still, the campaign showed that a unified black community could strongly challenge racism even in a city proud to be called "the cradle of the Confederacy." The times were changing. A similarly successful boycott in Baton Rouge had drawn scant notice in 1953; three years later the Montgomery victory brought its leader sudden national fame. This was in part a tribute to King's eloquent moral definition of the campaign as a struggle, not against whites, but against injustice. Yet his new eminence also reflected the fact that blacks, as King often proclaimed at rallies, "were on the move now."

King exerted his greatest influence as America entered the 1960s, and blacks found that the civil rights gains of earlier years still left the American Dream an infinitely receding vision. Six years after the Supreme Court heralded an end to segregated education, the great majority of black children still attended inferior, separate schools. Two acts of Congress, in 1957 and 1960, affirmed the franchise for adult citizens regardless of race, yet blacks in many parts of the South still went to the polls at peril to their jobs, or worse. Blacks did register notable gains in the armed forces, where they now risked their lives for freedom in integrated units. At home, however, signs for "white" and "colored" in restaurants, theaters, and other public places reminded returning veterans that, like other dark-skinned Americans a century after Emancipation, they still lived in a white man's democracy.

Black unrest suddenly spilled over in hundreds of student-led sit-ins across the South, which left established civil rights figures like King hastening to maintain their credibility in an age of rising mass action. Although King was among those surprised by his youthful emulators, he endorsed their conduct and in October 1960 he courted arrest at an Atlanta sit-in, as an act of civil disobedience

Robert Weisbrot, a Fellow of the Du Bois Institute at Harvard University and assistant professor of history at Colby College, is the author of *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (University of Illinois Press). He and Dolita Cathcart, who assisted in the research for this article, are preparing a study of the civil rights movement, to be published by W. W. Norton.

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against "an unjust system." His arrest was one of thousands made against civil rights demonstrators that year, but it commanded such national publicity that John F. Kennedy, the Democratic Presidential candidate, privately intervened to secure his release. The resulting increase in black electoral support helped (together with a heavy graveyard turnout in Texas and Illinois) to give Kennedy the Presidency. In turn, Kennedy's election encouraged blacks to mount new demonstrations in hopes of prodding their cautious ally in the White House to bolder reform leadership. In such ways, Martin Luther King Jr. acted as a catalyst whose symbolic stature focused attention and support on protest campaigns already gathering momentum.

Just as King's ethic of nonviolent resistance sanctioned disregard of selected laws, so it encouraged disruption of individual routines, businesses, even entire communities. Thus, the early sit-ins and boycotts won grudging concessions from merchants, for whom freedom from prejudice often came in the form of economic coercion. During the critical campaign to desegregate Birmingham's stores in 1963, it took the specter of rising disorder as well as falling profits to turn many hard-line racists into "moderates." A delegation of prominent Birmingham businessmen had just rebuffed a federal mediator's overtures when, as King described, they stepped outside to view the alternative to compromise: "There were Negroes on the sidewalks, in the streets, standing, sitting in the aisles of downtown stores. There were square blocks of Negroes, a veritable sea of Negro faces." Within three days of this encounter, the merchants agreed to local black demands for desegregation.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

It is a measure of King's readiness for confrontation that a salient by-product of his nonviolent campaigns, as in Birmingham and Selma, was violence. Historian David Garrow has argued persuasively that during the campaign for voting rights early in 1965, King deliberately sought to precipitate police assaults on black demonstrators in order to stir public support for civil rights legislation. If that approach had a hard manipulative edge, it was formed by harsh experience: earlier campaigns had failed to sustain media coverage or to win federal aid in the absence of racist violence. By contrast, in May 1963 Americans recoiled in horror and indignation at televised scenes from Birmingham, where attack dogs sank their fangs into fleeing black children, fire hoses blasted unarmed demonstrators against buildings, and officers swung nightsticks indiscriminately. The mood of the country in some sense paralleled that in antebellum times, when neighbors disapproved of any master whose slaves could be heard screaming from the lash; an owner with a decent respect for public opinion would first gag or sequester his slaves before whipping them. So, too, in the 1960s Americans were content to ignore the routine degradation of blacks so long as the violence that enforced it took place in the recesses of prisons or police stations. Through the news media, however, Americans involuntarily confronted their greatest national shame. The ex-slaves were heard suffering everywhere, and the society's walls of hypocrisy collapsed at the sound.

The moral awakening of white Americans was helped along by conciliatory appeals as well as by campaigns of confrontation. For these efforts to win over white citizens, the civil rights movement owed its greatest debt to King, who persuasively wrapped even the most disruptive acts in velvet images of interracial brotherhood and national redemption. Historian August Meier observed of King in 1965 that by emphasizing to whites "his belief in their salvation," he "makes the nonviolent direct action movement respectable."

This distinctive mediating mission to white America stemmed partly from King's matchless eloquence, sharpened by years of Northern graduate training and Southern Baptist preaching. In addition, he displayed a keen ear for the political sounds and symbols that could move a nation. Fusing civil rights with both democratic and patriotic content, he defended black demands as reflecting a "love for America and the sublime principles of liberty and equality on which she is founded." He voiced familiar cold war refrains, while imparting an added social challenge: that the way Americans treated the "eternal moral issue" of civil rights "may well determine the destiny of our nation in the ideological struggle with Communism." King also drew on his role as a minister, urging prompt civil rights action to guard "the most sacred values of America's Judeo-Christian heritage." Thus, on King's powerful baritone the civil rights movement soared beyond the goals of one group to embrace a country's deepest, worthiest ideals.

The effect on society of these skillful overtures is nowhere more strikingly confirmed than in the belief, still

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nearly universal among blacks and whites alike, that King and his allies were "moderates" of the black protest movement, while critics like Malcolm X were implacably "militant" scourges of American society. It is true that Malcolm brilliantly articulated black anger, castigated whites as "devils," and ridiculed civil rights activities such as the 1963 "farce on Washington." Yet his consuming cynicism afforded no outlet for challenging the social order beyond vague talk of a distant racial apocalypse. Like others on the extremes of black nationalism, he left segregation intact and, in general, substituted stridency for political strategy. The real militants were King and his fellow activists, who shook whole cities with mass demonstrations, demanded and secured sweeping changes in federal law, and reshaped the political agenda of two strong-minded chief executives. Like earlier protest groups, they proved that within the bounds of America's political system there were possibilities for dissent, pressure, and change.

As civil rights leaders continued to blend moral appeals with mounting protests, they succeeded in mobilizing public support for reform. In the wake of the Birmingham campaign, President Kennedy (who previously had tried to dissuade King from further demonstrations) called for comprehensive civil rights legislation. He also admonished Americans that they could no longer be content to say that their country had "no ghettos, no class or caste system, no master race except with respect to Negroes." Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, made civil rights the centerpiece of his liberal reform program, and in July 1964 Congress passed an omnibus measure that barred discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and voting, and tied federal aid to education to the desegregation of schools. In 1965 public outcries over violence in Selma led President Johnson to seize the moment for a televised address before a Joint Session of Congress. Requesting new legislation to vanquish racism, he also echoed the hymn made famous by civil rights workers, proclaiming, "And we shall—overcome!" Six months later a strong Voting Rights Act passed Congress by better than a four-to-one margin in both houses. Diehard racists still found champions like Alabama's Governor George Wallace, who pledged to defend "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!" But under the insistent prodding of black demonstrators and spokesmen like Dr. King, most Americans resolved that in the matter of legalized discrimination, it was indeed past time to overcome.

FOLLOWING THESE dramatic victories, the reform coalition that King had helped to shape suddenly faltered. The nation's deepening involvement in Vietnam diverted funds from domestic concerns, while King's criticisms of the war as immoral alienated both President Johnson and conservative black spokesmen in the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League. Black unity further eroded as King's exhortations to nonviolent protest were increasingly drowned out by cries of "Black Power!" At the same time, a growing focus by black leaders on de facto segregation in the ghettos disconcerted many northern liberals who had viewed civil rights as a sectional product for export to the needy, sinful South. The spread of ghetto riots hastened the reform coalition's demise amid a wave of conservative demands for "law and order." Though some black extremists hailed the riots as a "revolutionary statement," they were tragic in their destructiveness and politically counterproductive: filled with sound and fury, signifying Nixon.

The assassination of Martin Luther King, on April 4, 1968, deprived blacks of their ablest spokesman. His death, soon followed by the murder of Robert Kennedy, deepened the despair of reformers who saw the promise of social change shot down in a cross fire of senseless violence and political reaction. Theirs was a bitter journey from naive optimism to unmixed cynicism: in a year from Selma to Watts, in a decade from Camelot to San Clemente. For all the risks by vulnerable marchers, for all the energy and idealism, what had the protest movement that King symbolized really achieved?

IN RETROSPECT it is clear that the more expansive hopes for civil rights reform were markedly inflated. Residential segregation, seen in the persistence of black inner-city ghettos and nearly lily-white suburbs, has easily survived federal fiats against housing discrimination. De facto segregation of churches, social centers, and private schools also remains routine, suggesting that in important respects the society's newfound emphasis on interracial harmony has been more rhetorical than real. Black political power is still embryonic with respect to national office-holding and participation in the circles that shape foreign and domestic policy. As for economic progress, it has scarcely touched the black urban poor, whose continued desperation marks the most severe limitation of the civil rights movement.

Today, even by the spartan thresholds set by the federal government, one in three blacks lives in poverty. As in 1960, black median income is barely more than half that of white families, and the black unemployment rate continues to hover at more than twice the national percentage. This can be attributed in part to a rise in single-parent, female-headed black households from one-fifth of all black families in 1960 to nearly one-half today—a disastrous pattern in a society where such families, regardless of race, are twice as likely to be poor as two-parent families. But the "feminization of poverty" does not fully account for the plight of ghetto residents. The jobless rate for black males 16 or older is 45 percent, and for black youth it is 55 percent. In all, the roots of racial inequality were too deeply embedded in centuries of American history to be washed away by the purifying rains of a decade's liberal reform.

Still, if the protest movement King represented is judged by the distance it traveled rather than by barriers yet to be crossed, a record of substantial achievement unfolds. In communities throughout the South, "whites only" signs that had stood for generations suddenly came

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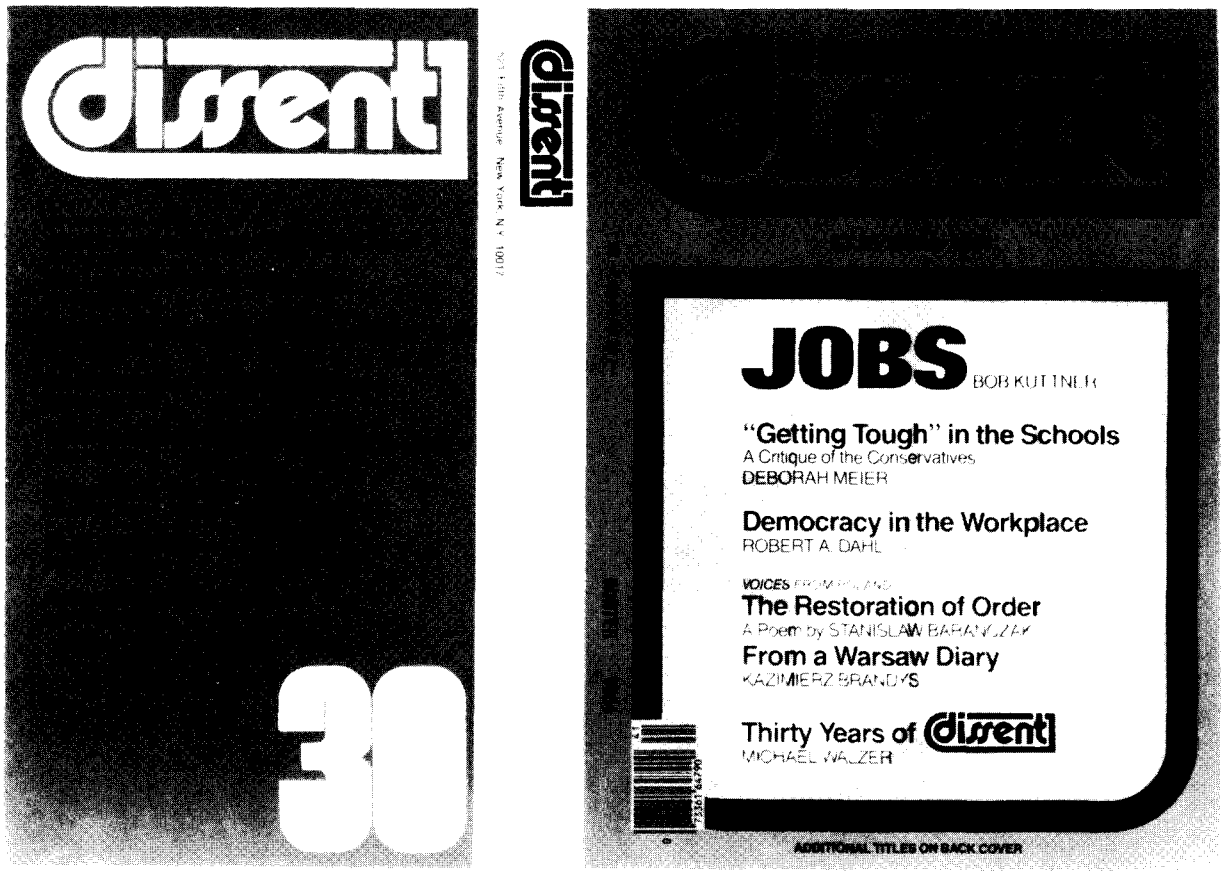

To American Liberals: A Friendly Invitation...

American liberalism has its troubles. In the time of Reagan, it has to fight a multitude of defensive battles. It also has to refocus its political and intellectual views. Yet the liberal tradition remains powerful, and it will surely reassert itself, sooner or later.

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KING'S COMMUNIST ASSOCIATES

The behavior of Senator Jesse Helms during last year's debate over whether to make Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national holiday served to perpetuate a lasting legacy of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy: a taboo on discussing the relationship between individuals and institutions in American society and the Communist Party or the Communist movement. Even today, to note simply that someone was or is a Communist, or that some institution had party ties, is seen in some quarters of liberal opinion and the national media as "red-baiting." In the case of King, even though only association with individual Communists is at issue, to address the matter is to invite in addition the now freely offered slander of "racism." Still, as Justice Felix Frankfurter put it, "History too has its claims."

Helms, by declaring that still-secret F.B.I. documents would shed new and important light on King, and by initiating a lawsuit to secure these documents, endeavored, by means of innuendo, to cast doubt on King's patriotism—not to mention on his private life. The lawsuit was utter nonsense: King's personal life had no bearing whatsoever on the matter at hand. As for secret documents, King was a public man with a public record. His prophetic struggle for nonviolent change and social justice earned him the honor that Congress and the President have now seen fit to bestow upon him.

In addition, an enormous number of files pertaining to King have already been declassified. Some scholars, most notably David J. Garrow, a professor of history at the University of North Carolina and the author of *The F.B.I. and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, have begun to grapple with this material. During the birthday debate the national press demonstrated remarkably little interest in all that is now known and published about King's relations with American Communists.

Helms's suggestion that King was "influenced by the Communists," the underlying implication being he was somehow their dupe, is *prima facie* foolish to anyone at all familiar with the life and career of Martin Luther King Jr. He was no one's dupe; nor was he the tool of men with a hidden political agenda. Thus, what is known about his relations with Communists—the precise information that proved of so little interest to the media while Helms was maligning King as either a secret Communist or a political naïf—is particularly puzzling, interesting, and perhaps also significant.

In 1962 the F.B.I. identified two men, both key figures in King's political entourage, as active or recently active Communists. One, Jack O'Dell, a ranking official of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, scarcely required F.B.I. identification. O'Dell had a long public history as a C.P. organizer; he never repudiated his ties to the party. As it happens O'Dell is now a senior official of Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH. The other man was the late Stanley Levison, a New York attorney. Levison was a figure of far greater consequence than O'Dell: he was a close personal friend of King, as well as a key political adviser; and just before his involvement with King, he was an important C.P. money-manager who dealt with the first-rank leadership of the American Communist Party. Among other things, Levison was apparently engaged in setting up businesses that served as party fronts, gathering revenue for the C.P. The F.B.I. learned of Levison's activities through "Operation Solo"—an intelligence-gathering coup (from the standpoint of the Bureau) in which two high-level C.P. functionaries, the brothers Morris and Jack Childs, were "turned" and thus became informants. Certain details about Levison's work for the party, such as his relations with the Soviets, remain classified. Still, considerable evidence confirms his pre-King work as a key party financier.

On several occasions, King was warned about his affiliations with Levison and O'Dell. Justice Department officials, including Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and finally, President John F. Kennedy himself, all told him that Levison and O'Dell were Communists; that they endangered the credibility of the movement and King's leadership; and that King should sever his ties with both men. King reacted with incredulity to the information about Levison. He was less skeptical about O'Dell's party ties. After an additional Justice Department briefing on Levison (Robert Kennedy and others had to be guarded as to the source of their information, lest Operation Solo be compromised), King agreed to dismiss O'Dell and to terminate his political relationship with Levison. In the end, however, he did neither.

Why? Any number of answers seem plausible: personal loyalty; a perception—particularly with regard to Levison—of indispensability; a degree of political or ideological affinity with regard to the civil rights movement; a feeling on King's part that he would be attacked as a Communist, whether or not he fired the two men; or just poor judgment. (After all, to associate politically with men who had strong ties to Communism American-style—i.e., Stalinism, which reigned supreme in the C.P.U.S.A.—seems more than simply unwise, particularly as it was likely to offend King's most important potential supporters, the Kennedy brothers.) The answers may be all—or none—of the above. Still, the issue cannot alter our final judgment: Martin Luther King Jr. was a singularly positive force in American life. It is well and right that we celebrate his birthday and honor his vision. But let us not, in studying him or any other individual or institution, be inhibited by those who would create taboos about the past and stifle debate. Jesse Helms should not be allowed to determine what we may, or may not, ask about Martin Luther King Jr. It is by questioning, and asking, and studying—all without inhibition—that we may remain as true to the spirit of free inquiry as was Dr. King.

ERIC BREINDEL

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down from hotels, restaurants, theaters, and other facilities. Court-ordered desegregation of schools quickened its pace and by the mid-1970s had become fact as well as law in over 80 percent of all southern public schools. There are now federal penalties for overt discrimination in employment, and gains in college education and professional training have led to an increase in the black middle class. Perhaps above all, black protest brought new respect for Afro-Americans, breaking forever the comfortable myth that they were contented with a bi-racial society and proving that they had the rare courage needed to challenge it.

In the South, black protest transformed the racial mores of an entire region, a change particularly evident in the tenor of its political life. Politicians quickly jettisoned their tested appeals to prejudice, learned to pronounce "Negro" in place of more casual epithets, and prefaced the names of newly valued black constituents with the once forbidden appellation "Mister." Even the past master of race baiting, George Wallace, was struck color blind on the road to Montgomery in his recent gubernatorial campaign. Wallace, who like most politicians believed above all in winning elections today, tomorrow, and forever, spent much of his hard-fought contest kissing black babies and humbly supplicating their parents' support, assuring them of his reborn attitudes on race matters. Whatever Wallace's deepest sentiments, his actions were a striking testament to the legacy of the civil rights protests he once vowed to crush, but which instead have left an indelible imprint on the nation's moral landscape.

ALTHOUGH King's vaunted place in civil rights history is assured, the meaning of his leadership to Americans today is less clear. Last year's March on Washington, organized by the King family, attempted to revive his reform vision, symbolized by his inspirational cry at the first march twenty years ago, "I have a dream today!" Yet while the event attracted a wider range of groups than the march in 1963 (including contingents of Hispanics, gays, and women), no cohesive social movement was in evidence. The original march was notable for the way its chief organizer, Bayard Rustin, fused its many participating groups into a disciplined lobby for two overriding goals: enactment of the civil rights bill pending in Congress and, secondarily, a federal jobs program. By contrast, the quality of diversity was strained at the recent march, in which a host of otherwise disparate placards and speeches all exalted "the dream," more as a substitute than a shorthand for a set of political priorities. King's name was continuously invoked, and one speaker imitated his manner in a recital aptly called "Echoes of Martin Luther King." The tributes were fitting, yet in the absence of a clear political agenda, they underscored that the dominant mood at this gathering for bold reform was nostalgia.

Among current leaders seeking to extend Martin Luther King's legacy, by far the most influential and best known is his former aide, Jesse Jackson. Jackson's Presidential campaign, marked by special attention to minorities and the poor, has sparked voter registration, and this in turn should enhance black influence in national politics. Jackson is also among the few leaders who approach King's charisma in addressing both blacks and whites. Yet his candidacy should give pause to even the most ardent civil rights advocates.

It is not simply that Jackson's character is suspect in view of his false claims to have cradled the dying Reverend King in Memphis. Nor is the problem merely one of questionable judgment, as in 1979 when he embraced P.L.O. leader Yasir Arafat, whose idea of "We shall overcome" might reasonably be considered somewhere over the rainbow coalition's moral limits. Beyond these shortcomings, there is the fact that Jackson's popular rhyming jingles have been rather bolder and more inventive than any of his specific ideas about aiding the disadvantaged. To date, his isolated criticisms of welfare have not greatly distinguished his candidacy from those of other major party figures of the left or right. In all, Jackson may have donned the mantle of Dr. King, but the garment fits so loosely as to leave its personal and political contours nearly unrecognizable.

IN WHAT DIRECTION, then, does King's legacy point for the current generation of Americans who have enshrined his name? Admittedly the question of what King might have done—as with any figure capable of dramatic growth, from the Kennedys to Malcolm X—must remain a matter for speculation. It is clear, though, that civil rights laws did not nearly exhaust King's interest in social change. The flaring of ghetto riots persuaded him that the nonviolent protest movement had to shift its focus to aid the mass of ghetto blacks who still lived in economic misery. His increasing activity in the northern ghettos after 1965 also accompanied growing doubts about the social consequences of capitalism. Although he continued to reject communism because it denied individual liberty, King also criticized capitalist economies, which he felt "often left a gulf between superfluous wealth and abject poverty." Increasingly, therefore, he came to view the reforms of the early '60s as only a first step toward curbing disparities of wealth and opportunity in a society still ridden by caste distinctions.

Though King by no means resolved the complex technical disputes over how government programs could best aid the poor, he contributed a lucid moral viewpoint in asserting that this cause should command the nation's highest priority. Lamenting the "fragmentary and spasmodic" reforms that "have failed to reach down to the profoundest needs of the poor," he insisted that the federal government either ensure full employment or provide guaranteed incomes "pegged to the median income of society, not at the lowest levels." In his final months, King was planning a Poor People's March on Washington to focus public attention on his call for "the total, direct, and immediate abolition of poverty."

Anticipating fierce resistance to appeals for a radical redistribution of national wealth, King believed that protests might need to reach a higher level of mass civil dis-

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obedience. He noted approvingly that "to dislocate the functioning of a city without destroying it can be more effective than a riot because it can be longer-lasting, costly to the larger society, but not wantonly destructive." Such protests, King hoped, would "transmute the deep rage of the ghetto into a constructive and creative force." It meant, as well, a shift away from reliance on federal good will, in favor of new tactics "to compel unwilling authorities to yield to the mandates of justice."

Despite these ominous signals, King still sought a consensus for nonviolent change, and toward that end he presented his urgent demands to end poverty as consistent with national interests and values. Such a program, he claimed, would strengthen the economy by raising consumer purchasing power and enlarging the labor force. King also believed that the issue could attract an interracial coalition, since two-thirds of the nation's poor were white. Finally, he termed the elimination of poverty a moral necessity "if democracy is to have breadth of meaning." By such efforts to temper protest with conciliation, King advanced the cause of the poor, not only as a man who had a dream, but as one who could then go tell it on the mountain of American democratic myth.

In all, the nation's first commemoration of King's life invites not only celebration, but also sober cerebration over his—and the country's—unfinished tasks. These remain as formidable as in his lifetime, though it was a mark of King's leadership to discern possibilities for reform equal to every test. Unsparing in his criticisms of the country, he nonetheless believed that "America, the richest and most powerful of nations, can well lead the way" to a "revolution of values" that would ensure a decent life for all people. In that faith, he shared his dream of a just society while realizing that this ideal still existed, to a challenging degree, only in the realm of his moral imagination.

Reflections on a farce.

GRENADA AND THE END OF REVOLUTION

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

REVOLUTION is a large idea, and Grenada a small island. Of such incongruities comedy is made. In Grenada, of course, it turned out not to be all comedy. As the bloody fratricidal denouement showed, even comedy staged on small islands can end in tragedy when the actors are jealous ideologues. ("The most terrible fight is not when there is one opinion against another," says Kierkegaard. "The most terrible is when two men say the same thing—and fight about the interpretation.") And when they use live ammunition. We now have the memory of Maurice Bishop to remind us that even in parody the revolution eats its children.

That the Grenadian revolution was a parody is evident from its only remaining legacy, its documents. These have been largely ignored because they are not portentous enough. True, there are secret treaties with North Korea, Cuba, and the Soviet Union; close ties with East Germany and Libya; and the airport, whose military uses were amply demonstrated by the U.S. Army. But Grenada was not exactly an active threat to world peace. Geopolitically, its documents are as uninteresting as the island itself. But as historical artifacts, as the unselfconscious autobiography of a revolution, they are fascinating. Their interest lies principally in their texture, in the tone of high seriousness with which they render the story of what happened when revolution came to Grenada. They tell us something about what happened to Grenada, and much about what has happened to revolution.

First, and always, there is the problem of scale. The memos addressed to Yuri Andropov, then chief of the K.G.B., and Defense Minister Dimitri Ustinov are from "Hudson Austin, General of the Army." The Soviets did not take kindly to such strutting. When Soviet Chief of Staff Marshal Ogarkov was pressed by his Grenadian counterpart, Chief of Staff Major Einstein Louison (in Moscow for military training), for slightly more aid than the Soviets had agreed to in writing, the somewhat nervous Grenadian report of the meeting records that "Marshal Ogarkov replied rather jokingly that students should be concerned with their studies."

Then there was Cde. (Comrade) Ian Jacobs's one month, eight-city tour of the United States to raise American consciousness and American money. His report on the trip judges both goals to have been accomplished. Media coverage was good, and the fundraising a success. What exactly does that mean? Usually when third world officials come to the United States to raise money, they have in mind, say, a new air defense system or an ambitious industrial project. Jacobs came for a word processor. He didn't quite get it. He reports with satisfaction, "We should be able to raise between three to five thousand U.S. dollars—a figure that should allow us to purchase a word

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processor within the next three to six months." Inflated figures, it turns out. By his own account, though he shilled for the "word processor project" at every stop from Sacramento to Philadelphia, it was not until he got to Miami that he found a contributor willing to donate "between $1,000 and $2,000"—but only on the condition that it be laundered to get him a tax exemption. ("In this context," adds Jacobs, "I spoke to a contact at the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia and I intend to follow up with them so that he can send the money to them and then they will send it here.")

And it is not hard to see why historians won't linger long over the secret agreement between the Communist Party of Cuba and the ruling party of Grenada, the New Jewel Movement. The protocol begins with the invocation, "Brotherly united by the same ideals of struggle in their respective countries, as well as of active solidarity in favor of the peoples that struggle for national liberation, and likewise, sharing the same convictions against imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, Zionism and racism," etc., etc. Accordingly, Cuba agrees to send Grenada, among other things, "two technicians in billboards and posters," "two technicians in sound equipment for public meetings," a "specialist in the work of the religious people," and a press cartoonist. (In another document, Bishop urges that someone be sent to Cuba or Nicaragua to learn how to keep a phony set of books for the I.M.F.)

Armed with a chief of staff, a word processor, and a press cartoonist (no record about whether it found a crooked accountant), Grenada was ready to do battle with imperialism.

WHAT THE REVOLUTION lacked in scale, it made up for in volume. The American invasion force turned up tons of documents, boxes upon boxes of reports, minutes, diaries—a sort of gigantic *Reflections on the Revolution*. The report of a meeting of the Party's Central Committee in mid-September 1983 runs to more than twenty thousand words. It begins by calling to the attention of the Central Committee sixteen previous and available reports from "1. Minutes of the last emergency Central Committee [meeting]" to "16. Workers' Committee analysis of the Working Class for the Month of August." Things move quickly in a month.

Before his death Lenin said, "We have become a bureaucratic utopia." Grenada aspired to that—the number of meetings, reports, reports on meetings, and meetings on reports, is staggering—but, unfortunately, the bureaucratic revolution appears to have occurred very early in the literacy campaign. One example: Cde. Hazel-Ann (no last name given), in Moscow for ideological training, reports that one of her fellow Grenadian students is ill. "The doctor's report is that he has high pertension and is sick with his heart."

Back home high pretension was epidemic. Heart sickness followed. For there is poignancy in the idealism shown by ordinary people caught up in the enthusiasm of revolution, committed to its promise, utterly and sincerely devoted to making it work—whatever it is. Hazel-Ann, for example, had apparently heard of the party strife of mid-September 1983 that was ultimately to lead to the final massacre and collapse of the revolution. Her fourteen-page, painfully neat, handwritten report from Moscow detailing the progress she and the other Grenadian comrades in her cell had made ends thus:

> We take this opportunity to express our deep concern about the situation as analyzed by the C.C. [Central Committee]; and our confidence in the Party's leadership and our collective ability to avert the situation through hard, organised, systematic, self-critical Leninist-type work. The C.P.S.U. [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] International Leninist Party School N.J.M. [New Jewel Movement] Party Cell repledges our commitment to the Party; to building a strong Party on Marxist-Leninist principles and to the defence and building of the Revolution, along the lines that would bring us to achieving SOCIALISM. Long Live Our Party!

The several features of this citation characterize much of the party's internal communication: (1.) an earnestness born of an intense will to believe; (2.) an ambiguity bordering on confusion as to what exactly one is believing in; all expressed in (3.) the most rigid Marxist-Leninist language, a jargon so jarring that it lends a touch of irony to Grenada's boast to having been the first Marxist revolution in the English-speaking world. Interestingly, this Marxist-Leninist mumbo jumbo appears less in the Party's public discourse—after all, Bishop's speeches had to be understood by ordinary people—than in the private communications of the leadership. Unlike Orwell's cynical O'Brian, in Grenada the big brothers and sisters were not too worldly to believe what they made others believe.

AT ITS crucial final meeting, the Central Committee recognizes that the country, the "material base" as Bishop puts it, is falling apart. Major Louison (Einstein, back from Moscow), observes that the roads are the worst he's ever seen, and the Central Committee falls into a fierce debate over defects in party structure and ideology that can account for this state of affairs. (With the island's productive energies being poured into meetings, reports, and note-taking, it isn't surprising that there was little left to devote to the material base. Louison did observe that "while we are losing links with the masses, the middle-class types have been coming to the revolution for jobs." That clue is quickly ignored.) The minutes are full of criticism and self-criticism of "right opportunism," "petit bourgeois deviationism," "economism." They all agree on the antidote, "firm Leninism," but they're stuck on exactly what that means. A comrade called on to explain his vote against a two-man leadership for the party replies that "He is not clear how the dialectics will unfold. He said that he has not seen it anywhere in the science." People who talk like that in the Kremlin surely are referred (to the K.G.B. perhaps) for psychiatric evaluation.

In Grenada they rise to the Central Committee. At its

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penultimate meeting of August 26, 1983, the consensus is that the party is in deep crisis and the revolution in danger of collapsing. Bishop speaks last. His summary remarks include the recommendation to "research the history of the Party during the last five or six years, minutes and conclusions will be useful to look at," "study the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," and "reread *Standards of Party Life* by Pronin [sic]." At a 1981 rally Bishop had called on the masses to "Unionise! Mobilise! Educate! Democratise!" In the privacy of the Central Committee, his final advice is plagiarize.

In the end, plagiarism, jargon, and ideological study are not enough. Even Bishop admits that the mood of the "masses" is very low and the revolution falling apart; the consensus estimate is that it has no more than three to six months left. What could save it? What is missing? For that the Central Committee, by all accounts, had no answer. But the revolution did.

"General Rule: no social revolution without terror," said Napoleon. Bishop may have been grandiose, but he was not cruel. He may have been a dictator (hundreds, perhaps thousands, passed through his prisons), but he was not a terrorist.

> Bulletin From The Main Political Department, October 19, 1983. Revolutionary soldiers and men of the People's Revolutionary Armed Forces: Today our People's Revolutionary Army has gain [sic] victory over the right opportunist and reactionary forces which attacked the Headquarters of our Ministry of Defense. These anti-worker elements using the working people as a shield entered Fort Rupert. . . . [T]he counter-revolutionary elements, headed by Maurice Bishop . . . [and comprised of] only businessmen, nuns, nurses and lumpen elements. . . .

Bishop and many lumpen were killed in the final massacre. But even the last tragic act could not escape the revolution's parodic destiny. The final communiqué of the new junta concludes with a stirring invocation of the memory of those who had just died fighting against Bishop and for the newest revolution:

> Comrades, the death of OC Conrad Mayers, W02 Raphael Mason, Sgt Dorset Peters, and L/Cpl Martin Simon have not gone in vain, but have further manured the struggle of our Grenadian people. Long live the Memory of our fallen comrades. Long live the Grenada Revolution. Forward Ever, Backward Never. Death to Imperialism.

The hero as fertilizer.

Then the curtain falls.

I STARTED by suggesting that revolution is a large idea. Perhaps one should say *was* a large idea. Decades of trying to shoehorn it into the Grenadas of this world has diminished it greatly. It still has legitimacy: the first act of any gang of thugs that can seize a radio station and an airport is to proclaim itself a revolutionary junta, usually of national salvation. But it is precisely because every gang of thugs, or posturers, or dreamers, claims its honor that it has become so debased. Like other newly internationalized Western concepts ("rights" as defined by the U.N., for example), it has been emptied of meaning. And empty of meaning it acquires power.

Michael X, the Trinidadian hanged in his native country for (simple) murder after a career in London as a salon revolutionist, declared that "the only politics I ever understood is the politics of revolution." To which V.S. Naipaul, also a Trinidadian, answers, "London words, London abstractions, capable of supporting any meaning . . . [he] chose to give them." Maurice Bishop, who like Michael X had been through both London and the West Indian Black Power Movement of the early 1970s, was adept at the political use of empty abstractions. In 1981 he gave a speech on "freedom of the press" to explain why he shut down the last remaining independent newspaper in Grenada: "[The] most important reason of all: This is revolution, we live in revolutionary Grenada, this is a revolutionary condition, and there is a revolutionary legality, and they will have to abide by the law of the revolution. When the revolution speaks, it must be heard, listened to. Whatever the revolution decrees, it must be obeyed; when the revolution commands, it must be carried out; when the revolution talks, no parasite must bark in their corner."

Any word that grants automatic legitimacy and at the same time is capable of supporting any meaning becomes a source of great power. The circle is vicious: as "revolution" becomes more ubiquitous, it becomes more empty of meaning, more powerful a tool, and thus more attractive to the next gang of thugs, posturers, and dreamers, who further empty it of meaning.

THE IDEA of revolution is debased first by its ubiquity. There is, though, an exception, which paradoxically makes the situation worse. Revolution is not a serious idea everywhere. In the Eastern bloc it evokes only cynicism; in the West, where it is considered a safe form of play for the young, nostalgia. (Or else it is used trivially to denote any change of habits: it seems we are now in the midst of a telephone revolution.) People who want to believe in revolution have now to believe in third world revolution. The idea of revolution has devolved of necessity upon that part of the world to which it is least suited. For what, in a post-colonial world, with the wars of independence won, can revolution mean? Almost invariably—from Tanzania to Cambodia to Grenada—it is said to mean socialism. That makes for problems of scale, or to state it more broadly, of culture and development, as the Grenada documents show. After all, what can socialism mean in a place where there is no working class? What can working class mean where there is no industry? To speak of revolution in such circumstances is either an act of deception or a form of false consciousness.

But there is a deeper, older reason for the fallen state of the revolutionary idea. It is not cultural, but ideological; not a function of revolution's current entrapment in the developing world, but a function of its entrapment in nineteenth-century Marxism. For it was not just London-

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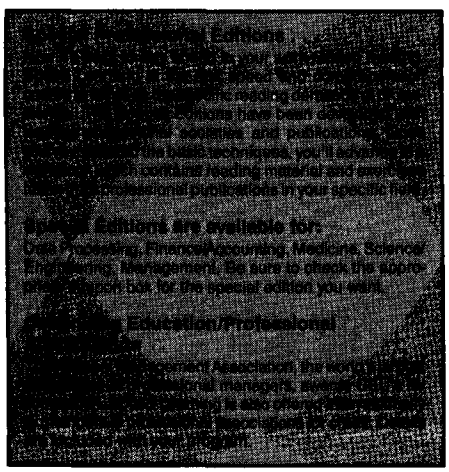

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talk that Maurice Bishop spoke, but Marx-talk; not just an alien idea he brought to his island, but a socialist one—and of a particular kind: "scientific" socialism. (Remember the baffled Grenadian central committee member: "I have not seen it in the science"?) By "scientific" Marx intended to distinguish his historicist socialism from the "utopian" variety, on which he could not heap enough ridicule. The folly of the utopian socialists, like Proudhon, was to betray an interest in what post-revolutionary society would look like. Marx denounced as infantile the idea of detailing the society of the future. The working class has "no ideals to realize," he said, "but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant." The purpose of revolution is to allow "the solution to the riddle of history" (communism) to unfold; to guess at the answer in advance is to misunderstand the entire revolutionary process.

"In Marx you will find no trace of utopianism in the sense of inventing the 'new' society and constructing it out of fantasies," said Lenin. The end of Marxist revolution—i.e., what socialism is to be—is explicitly, inherently, purposely left open and undefined. In a word, empty. As Melvin Lasky points out, this indeterminateness of the revolutionary idea, this sundering of utopia from revolution, of ends from means is the great legacy of Marx's overthrow a century ago of the utopian socialists.

Since the preferred form even of national revolutions today is Marxist, the modern revolutionary idea necessarily is capable of supporting any meaning. (It is no accident that the only authentically transforming revolution of our time was the Iranian revolution, a decidedly non-, indeed, anti-Marxist affair.) The triumph of anti-utopian revolutionism has bequeathed to us a generation of revolutionaries with no idea of the kind of society they wish to construct (again, the Ayatollah knows precisely what he wants the world to look like—Qum) and, most importantly, with no hesitation about pursuing revolution in the absence of such an idea. A century ago an Irish Chartist leader denounced such negative revolutionaries as "mere speculators in anarchy." Today they are not only a majority at the U.N., they are custodians of the revolutionary idea itself.

"What socialism will look like when it takes on its final forms we do not know and cannot say," said Lenin. Little wonder that neither could the Central Committeemen in Grenada, so desperate to build socialism, so bereft of any idea what that meant. They not only suffered from the problem of the size of their island; they suffered from the nihilism of their guiding ideology. It is a cardinal feature of this age—indeed it is what makes this the age of revolution—that they should have decided to carry on regardless. The result is instructive.

The deadly ambitions of Syria's President.

ASSAD THE TERRIBLE

BY DAVID PRYCE-JONES

IN THE EYES of the Arab world, the intervention of Western troops in Lebanon needs no explanation. Manifestly the peace must be kept, and the troops are supporting friends of the West while opposing its enemies. If this were not so uncertain and menacing a world, a majority of Arabs would deem themselves comforted by the presence of these troops, and hope for large reinforcements. They don't wish to suffer under the likes of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and the Syrian Army. However, in the past the West has proved itself so confused about the defense of its interests that its friends abroad now choose to maintain a prudent silence. They watch amazed as once again a position of strength is frittered away for no good reason.

Some Arabs, of course, resent Western interests in the Middle East and actively work to thwart them. A few do so out of political or religious convictions. Hafez al-Assad is not one of them. Having no such ideological convictions, he is prepared to ally himself with whoever is willing and able to help him realize his personal and national ambitions. Like Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, as well as several other would-be rulers in the Middle East, he is following in the steps of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, who first perceived how Western indecisiveness and Soviet expansionism might be played off one against the other, brilliantly exploited to create opportunities for himself. Perhaps even more consistently and skillfully than Nasser, Assad has proved that the simple expedient of making trouble will be rewarded by Washington and Moscow, either together or in turn. Enough trouble has to be

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generated for Washington and Moscow to worry about the risk of superpower confrontation, but not so much trouble that this risk really materializes. Assad has mastered the trick perfectly.

Events in Lebanon have been dictated by Assad ever since he made the decision to invade the country in 1976. In succession he has backed the Christians, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Druse, and the Shiites—not because he cares a rap for them or their causes, but solely to establish Syrian supremacy in the country. Lebanon, in his view, is destined to belong to Syria. The point has now been reached where Assad will either be rewarded for what some will consider statesmanship of a high order, or punished for what is piracy pure and simple.

With troops in Lebanon, America and its allies are in the position of arbiters. Their presence was partly meant to warn Assad that wiles and violence were not to be allowed to destroy a neighboring country, which was also a kind of ramshackle democracy; in short, that piracy would not pay off.

So few troops were landed, however, and with such apparent public handwringing and hesitation, that Assad could afford to ignore the obvious lesson, and even hope to turn the situation to advantage with more wiles and violence. Although neither the handful of Marines in their bunkers nor the U.S.S. *New Jersey*'s one-ton shells are enough to restrain him, a false move on his part could certainly lead to an increase in the Western presence, which might transform it into an imposing force. If, on the other hand, the Western forces fail to achieve a peace, and depart in frustration, Assad's importance will be inflated out of all proportion. He will be called the next Arab statesman, a greater Nasser. Among other consequences, the Ayatollah Khomeini's position will be strengthened, and Iraq correspondingly diminished. And another generation in the Middle East will be doomed to general war.

FOR THE TIME BEING, only one thing blocks Assad: the Israeli Army, posted a short forty kilometers from Damascus. A victorious campaign by Israel against Syria would bring his downfall. Fully impressed by this, he has set about temporarily propitiating the Israelis by breaking the P.L.O. in Lebanon. With astonishing symmetry, the Syrians at Tripoli in the north have completed the previous Israeli action at Beirut in the south. With whom is Yasir Arafat supposed to negotiate in the future, and about what, except the saving of his skin? Under the circumstances, Israel could release to Arafat the four thousand or so P.L.O. men from the Ansar detention camp, for they offer little danger, except perhaps to themselves, if they try to re-form a military force.

Israel and Syria did not exactly collude in destroying the P.L.O., but "objectively," to borrow Marxist jargon, they share an interest in controlling it. Nearly twenty years ago, it is true, Sryia took a lead in sponsoring Arafat and the P.L.O. as a move against Egypt as much as against Israel. In the macabre minuet of inter-Arab politics, partners since then have been required to change time and again. In Damascus, Arafat and lesser P.L.O. lights have alternated between the hero's welcome, prison, and expulsion. That is over. The rump of the P.L.O. under Abu Musa is as obedient to discipline as any other Syrian army unit. Syria, like Israel, will no longer run the risk of being embroiled in conflicts of the P.L.O.'s choosing. The stakes have grown too great to allow that.

In an arc from the Golan Heights up to the Bekaa Valley, Israel and Syria confront each other in a test of will and strength. National interests are involved. Syria is in a position to deny Israel the security it aims for above all else. Israel is in a position to deny Syria the regional role its leadership considers appropriate. Militarily both sides are approximately matched, in quantity though not in quality. Unexpected breakthroughs, even a power-sharing compromise, are conceivable, but in general the two countries are locked in a rivalry which seems likely to last for some time to come. From every perspective—political, historical, religious, social—Israel and Syria are incompatible.

BOTH COUNTRIES came into existence in the aftermath of the Second World War. Comparison stops there. The Israelis valued the European model of democracy for its freedoms and flexibilities, and evolved their own version of it. The Syrian experience, first in the Ottoman Empire and then under the French Mandate, has been that of a tribal society struggling for an identity suitable for the present.

Inherited Islamic society could not be squared with the secularist and rationalist education that was necessary if the West was to be emulated. What was most valued in the heritage seemed to be also what inhibited progress. Colonizers were blamed, but the French and British withdrew, and after 1946 Syria could call itself independent. Still nothing was fundamentally altered. To be obliged to look at foreigners, in particular Westerners—Christians and Jews—and find them more advanced is painful to Syrian pride. The benefits of the twentieth century in the West, ranging from democratic rule to technological modernity, have been evident, but nothing in Syrian history or culture allowed for institutions whereby these benefits could be developed at home.

More bitterly, independence did not activate Pan-Arabism but instead released ancient rivalries between Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo, between this sect and that, between this plan and that. Attitudes of resentment and hatred were naturally aroused, directed on the one hand against foreigners who proffered attractive but forbidden gifts, and on the other hand against themselves for their apparent deprivation and shortcomings. Syrian identity has therefore come to be expressed in terms of nationalistic loyalty to one's own kind and enmity to all other kinds. Custom cannot give way, nor modernity be imposed, with the result that Syria today is not quite tribal, not quite totalitarian, but suffering the worst features of

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both systems. (I use the term totalitarian to describe the Syrian system of government not in its technical or theoretical sense, but to convey the extent of that government's absolutism.)

This wretched predicament is exemplified in the life and times of the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad, an outstanding example of a tribal-totalitarian leader. Born in 1930 into a peasant family, Assad belongs to the first generation of Syrians able to shape an independent destiny. His abilities are exceptional, and it is probably true to say that a national vision has driven his personal ambitions. Having seen the ambiguities of Assad's character firsthand after the 1973 war, Henry Kissinger called him "the most interesting man in the Middle East."

WHATEVER his vision and abilities, however, Assad was born an Alawite, and that fact governs his conduct. Alawites are a heretical Shiite sect, numbering around 10 percent of the otherwise largely Sunni population of Syria. Traditionally Alawites have been downtrodden, if not despised, less able to defend themselves than their counterparts, the Druse minority. The Syria in which Assad grew up offered him continuing humiliation as an Alawite. In 1952 he was the first Alawite ever to be accepted at the well-known Homs Military Academy for training as an officer in the air force.

A man in his position had no hope of high promotion in the face of the Sunni ruling classes. If he was to advance, the Sunni establishment would have to be destroyed. In the 1950s and 1960s the opportunity to do so was at hand. The Sunni establishment was concerned principally with protecting its interests. In a process of carefully contrived coups d'état, a handful of soldiers and politicians shared the spoils of office. Tribalistic self-aggrandizement was such that at times "Syria was on the verge of disintegration as an organized political community," to take a striking phrase from *The Struggle for Syria* by Patrick Seale, an authority highly sympathetic to Syria.

Opposition to the Sunni establishment came from the Baath Party. Funded by intellectuals, the Baath Party was nominally a Marxist group, aiming to combine state socialism and nationalism. Once again, there was little or no solid basis in the society for the realization of such concepts. Members of the Baath Party were too impatient and too intolerant to permit anyone to pursue their ideas or interests. Soon the party evolved into an instrument in the battle for power, a conspiratorial forum for the discontented and the excluded, including Christians, Druse, and Alawites. By the time the Baath Party seized power in 1963, the party and the army offered parallel channels of advancement.

Assad was in his element there. Years of deadly intrigue in the Baath Party and in the armed forces were required before he could stage his own coup in 1970. Those whom he outmaneuvered on the way have been either killed or imprisoned. A plebiscite in 1972, in which Assad was the sole candidate, gave him a 99.2 percent vote. Since then he has been head of state, secretary general of the Baath Party, and commander in chief of the armed forces. A state of emergency was first decreed in 1963, a convenience which Assad extended in 1970, and by which he has ruled ever since. Syria and Assad, in short, have been interchangeable words for the last thirteen years.

THE COUNTRY has been shocked by the Alawites' brutal dispossession of the Sunni establishment. Thousands of Sunnis, not only politicians but anyone with independence of mind, have fled the country. Now and again one of these exiles makes a speech or writes a pamphlet, and is murdered for his pains. Druse and Christians have also been purged to make way for Alawites. Jews have lost all civil rights. Assad's younger brother, Rifaat, is commander of a special body known as the Defense Unit, which numbers about twenty-five thousand, and guards the family and does its dirty work. By any standard, Rifaat al-Assad is particularly sinister. According to some reports, on his orders in 1981, perhaps as many as one thousand political prisoners held at Palmyra in the desert were summarily shot. It is claimed that money has been salted away in his name in other countries. Rifaat's deputy commander in the Defense Unit is a brother-in-law. A cousin, Adnan al-Assad, controls so-called Struggle Companies, containing about five thousand men for secret security assignments. Jamil al-Assad, another brother of the President, has a security organization of his own, and when in 1981 his banking business failed, the government met the debt. The cool ferocity with which Hafez al-Assad imposes himself is not often found in anyone—Alawite, Sunni, or American.

Outside Assad's immediate family, his most influential advisers are also Alawites: Mohamed al-Khouli, chief of Air Intelligence and chairman of the Presidential Intelligence Committee; Ali Dubah, head of Military Intelligence; and Ali Salih, commander of the Air Defenses. Sunnis still in prominent positions are either docile nonentities or, like the foreign minister, Abdel Halim Khaddam, married to Alawites.

This tribal power base has to be maintained at all costs, for otherwise Assad, as well as his brothers and cousins and their Alawite associates, will be swiftly massacred. Opponents of all stripes have been tortured or hanged, sometimes in public. In a 1983 report on Syria, Amnesty International supplied lists of hundreds of names of people who have reportedly "disappeared" or "who are alleged to have been victims of extrajudicial execution by the Syrian security forces." The most effective challenge to the regime has come from the Moslem Brotherhood. These Sunni extremists have attempted to assassinate Assad, and incited mass uprisings in Aleppo and Hama and elsewhere. In 1982 Hama was sealed off and largely destroyed by the army's artillery. When order was restored, in the words of the same Amnesty report, "estimates of the number dead on all sides ranged from ten thousand to twenty-five thousand."

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Actually Assad's methods are probably not held against him as much as might be thought in the West. He may even be ruefully admired by those who recognize that they would have done the same, especially to the Alawites, if given the chance. Expectations of benign and liberal government are not high in Syria. Only a tyrant-caliph is held fit to survive, and the hands of such a figure customarily drip with blood.

A MIRROR-IMAGE may be seen across the border in Iraq. President Saddam Hussein also comes from a peasant family, and he too was trained in the army, and joined the Iraqi Baath Party in order to stage his coup. All leading opponents whom he could seize have been executed, and the rest have been imprisoned or have escaped abroad. In Iraq, however, the population is predominantly Shiite, and President Hussein is a Sunni. His cronies are therefore Sunnis, from his home town of Takrit. In the hope of shoring up his standing, he has played for territorial gains in Iran in the same spirit as Assad has played for territorial gains in Lebanon. So damagingly exact is the parallel between the two men, so bitter is their rivalry for preeminence, that they work ceaselessly to undermine and bring down one another. Syria goes so far as to supply Iran with Russian-made munitions in its war against Iraq, making a mockery of Arab unity. Just as Assad can be destroyed primarily by Israel, so President Hussein now is the prime target of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Foreign adventures, promoted to justify these tribal-totalitarian systems, in the end prove their undoing. No doubt Assad believes that Syria is a more authentic Arab state than Iraq or Egypt, and has a claim to historic Palestine and Lebanon. In practice this entails quarreling with each and every neighbor. Syria has frequently mobilized against Iraq, and variously invaded Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel. In 1978 Assad informed an admiring journalist, Karim Pakradouni, writing for *Le Monde*, that "If we had common frontiers with Egypt our army would certainly have invaded after the visit of Sadat to Jerusalem." It is standard Syrian policy to intervene in every Middle East state to promote proxies and to subvert opponents, roles which switch according to expediency. Realpolitik of this tribal-totalitarian type easily accommodates support for Maronites and Druse and the P.L.O. in Lebanon in such rapid alterations and reverses that the subordinates are decimated. The more savage the consequences, moreover, the less the penalty in today's frail and unprincipled Arab world. In their helplessness Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states pay billions of dollars in subsidies to Assad, in effect, rewarding the potential for mischief, which they hope to limit.

Assad's legitimacy rests on the successful use of force. His main achievement is the hold that Syria has acquired in Lebanon as a result of its 1976 invasion and subsequent occupation. Defeat in Lebanon, or some unfavorable withdrawal, perhaps ignominious, directly threatens his survival, his very life. In such an event, he will resort to every brutality and ruse, playing the Soviet card for all it is worth.

By nature, Assad has an instinctive hostility toward the Soviet Union, and in his dealings with it, he has cultivated no warmth, no real allegiance. Soviet advisers and soldiers in Syria are treated with a disregard little short of the contempt reserved for all foreigners. If he could profit from expelling them in the Sadat style, he would do so. By putting himself ostensibly within the Soviet orbit, Assad obtains immediate reward in weaponry and financing, but in the longer view, he is enormously raising the price eventually to be asked for American friendship. In the event that such friendship is not forthcoming, or that he is not able to win the leadership role to which he aspires, he can ensure that everybody loses. His is the classic stance of the spoiler. That is his true value to Moscow, and the basis of his treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union. Skills comparable to Assad's have served well every single apparatchik in the Kremlin, and not one of them can have the least illusion about the reliability of the man. Promoting a regime able and willing to block peace for no compelling reason other than self-promotion enables the Soviets to continue to have influence and to consolidate in the area. For the moment that is enough for them.

THE UNITED STATES must persuade Assad that the alternative to a sovereign Lebanon is not its integration with Syria, but widening war. Dollars are useful in such persuasion, of course, but guns are more so. Pre-Assad Syria threatened the independence of Lebanon in 1958. On that occasion eight thousand U.S. Marines landed, with seventy ships of the Sixth Fleet in support. Two thousand British paratroops simultaneously flew to Jordan. Democratic Lebanon was preserved, the precarious balance between Christians and Moslems was extended for another dozen years, until the P.L.O. presence after 1970 helped to revive civil war and precipitate the present crisis. In simple language, peace was enforced.

Today Western power is infinitely greater, but its use more irresolute. The temptation to Assad is therefore to treat the Americans as though they were any other sect in the area and kill them off with impunity. Suicide truck bombs convulse American opinion. Americans apparently can be persuaded by rhetoric and a careful dose of craziness that peace-bringing (it never was peacekeeping) is too difficult and too dangerous, and perhaps not quite moral. How tantalizingly close the realization of "Greater Syria" must sometimes seem, to be followed by a happy settling of accounts not only with Lebanon but with Iraq and Jordan too. Establishing at last the supremacy of Damascus over Baghdad, and Cairo too, Assad could act the true tyrant-caliph, wiping out the humiliation of many centuries, with all enemies vanquished and dead. Clever propaganda and military pinpricks may induce the West to pull out. Then the Israelis alone will be left, just forty short kilometers from Damascus. And that is where will and strength will be tested.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Years Apart

Two uncommon films—one American, one Italian—with a common theme: the effect of a young person on another generation.

Reuben, Reuben is unexpected from today's constricted Hollywood: it doesn't follow any well-blazed genre trail. Adapted from a Peter DeVries novel and from a play adapted from that nov-

Reuben, Reuben
(Twentieth Century-Fox)

Basileus Quartet
(Libra/Cinema 5)

el, it is essentially a character study. That character is a Scottish poet named Gowan McGland who is stranded physically in a New England college town and is stranded creatively on the shoals of his late 30s. Anyone familiar with the latter life of Dylan Thomas must see its relation to this story; more, DeVries apparently relied on his readers' knowledge of Thomas to provide a subtext. One particularly relevant aspect of Thomas's life is the fact that he wrote more than half the poems that he published before he was twenty.

Gowan knows that he is estranged both from the culture that fertilized him and from whatever it was in him that was fertilized by his culture. With sardonic patience rather than moroseness, he seems prepared for a rather long period of dying, passing the time by drinking and womanizing, supporting himself by readings of his work and by filching the tips that his hosts leave for waiters. He doesn't particularly want to die, but then he doesn't particularly want to be poetically arid either. He knows that booze and bedding are the most trite of stopgaps, but he also knows that they make him all the more attractive to some women. How many "lost" poets on the skids can the average small-town wife encounter in her lifetime? So his dissolution is, in a sense, what keeps him going.

Then into the moldering of this ancient in his late 30s bursts youth. Most of Gowan's dalliance has been with wives of his own age at least; now he meets a young college graduate, Geneva Spofford, golden and vital, with whom he falls in love. She is clear eyed enough to see exactly what he is and what he wants from her. This includes much more than sex, she knows: for instance, he feels poetic stirrings again. Yet, as much for what he has done as for what he is, she begins an affair with him. Of course it ends badly, much more so for him, although badly enough for her and, in fact, for the film as well.

Gowan is surely the first character in history on whom a cuckold revenges himself through dentistry. And he must be one of the few characters considering suicide who is carried over the brink, willy-nilly, by an affectionate accident. The dental device is clever: it undermines his morale by sentencing him to wear dentures. The latter device is unsatisfying: the irony is slight and quite tangential to the theme. The screenplay, by the veteran Julius J. Epstein (b. 1909), has a frazzled end. All it does is give some wan substance to the title: Reuben is the name of a large dog, which is seen in the film's final shot.

The director, Robert Ellis Miller, clearly knew what he wanted from his cast and how to get it; but the overall pace of the film is a bit sluggish, and Miller's attempts to keep it visually interesting—walks, arbitrary changes of setting—are a trifle strained.

But the film has its riches. The dialogue, by Epstein out of DeVries, is wry, bitter, well wrought. In two of the minor roles, E. Katherine Kerr, as one of the compliant wives, and Roberts Blossom, as Geneva's grandfather, are particularly vivid. Kerr was also good as one of Meryl Streep's co-workers in *Silkwood*: I hope she gets bigger parts. Blossom has *always* been good and has long deserved bigger parts.

Geneva is a debut, by Kelly McGillis who was a student at Juilliard when Miller and the producer, Walter Shenson, chose her. McGillis is entirely competent in the role, and her personal effect is like a shower of gold. I haven't seen such an aureate first impression since Julie Christie walked down the street in *Billy Liar*. In the most poignant moment of *Reuben, Reuben*, Geneva sprawls face down, naked, on Gowan's bed after making love. She represents everything unattainably beautiful, now proved unattainable because it is still out of reach after lovemaking—especially out of reach when seen through the eyes of Gowan, "old" and tormented by being so far from her youth when he is so close.

Gowan is played superbly by Tom Conti, familiar from the PBS series *The Glittering Prizes*, and from his Broadway appearance in *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?* Conti, who had an Italian father and a Scottish mother, grew up in Scotland; his accent is authentic, and his air of Celtic romance, tweedy yet mysterious, is engaging. From his first moment, reading his poems to a ladies' club, Conti strikes a complex chord: remembering the self who wrote the poems, proud of that self yet mourning his distance from it; hating his audience and

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Carmen. The *Carmen* story dramatized in the lives of people in a Spanish dance production based on *Carmen*. Lithe and electrifying. (Reviewed 12/5/83)

The Dresser. Albert Finney as an old actor-lion on the day of his last Lear. Tom Courtenay as his meek yet managerial dresser. Splendidly done. (12/12/83)

Experience Preferred . . . But Not Essential. Quietly winning tale of a girl working as a waitress in a Welsh resort hotel, summer of 1962, where she comes of age. (11/21/83)

Terms of Endearment. American film acting near its best in this well written and directed chronicle of a young woman, her husband, her odd mother, her mother's ex-astronaut lover. (12/26/83)

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hating himself for the cheapness of hating them. Throughout the film, Conti seems to be dwelling somewhere distant, within his body: moving to a rhythm different from others, a rhythm sad and ultimate. The best compliment is that he is utterly convincing as the man who once wrote those poems and can no longer write.

IN "BASILEUS QUARTET" youth again disturbs age, except that this time it's real age. This Italian film is, as the title suggests, about a string quartet. They are famous, have been successful for decades throughout Europe. The first violinist dies of a heart attack, and the three survivors assume that the quartet's career is finished. They are rather agreeably resigned to this state: all three are in their 60s and well off.

A young violinist insists on auditioning for the vacant post, which the three survivors haven't even thought of as a vacant post. After they hear the young man, the three know that the quartet will continue.

This episode is the first of the film's subtleties. Before the young man appeared, the three others must certainly have known of, could easily have summoned, a competent replacement but were clearly not interested. The fact that they let the young man persuade them to listen is almost tantamount to their acceptance of him; their agreement to listen is because of his person. When he turns out to be an exceptional violinist, their acceptance of him is like the acceptance of a fate—for each of them.

He changes the three oldsters' lives in different ways, but never by trying to. He never directly seeks anything from them. His effect comes about simply from his *being* among them: his energy, his differences, his attraction for women wherever they tour. Suddenly a small group of senior citizens (ghastly term) is knocked askew by a junior citizen who alters their community without even thinking about it.

The idea of a string quartet as a community, a small society, a controlled experiment in generational collision, is so simple that it has brilliance. The author and director, Fabio Carpi, who has been a critic, develops that initial idea logically and well. This development takes the idea far away from gimmick, makes the story probe far beyond specialized lives into general themes. And Carpi directs with an eye and an ease that are lovely

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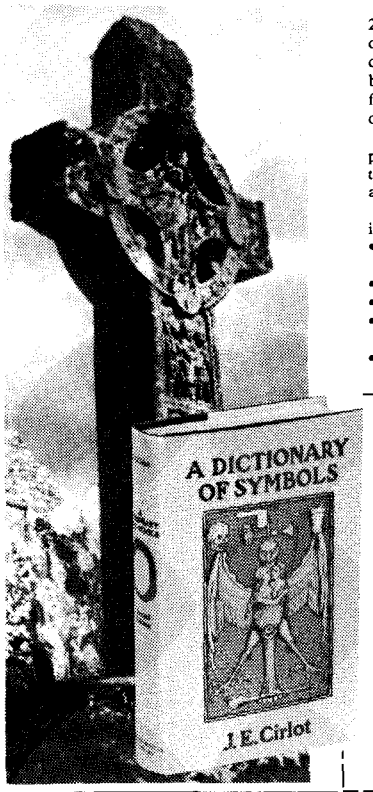

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in themselves and that whet the appetite for his future.

All the men in the quartet mime the music-playing skillfully. Three of them are not Italian: their voices are dubbed, I assume. Pierre Malet, the young man, is handsome and unpretentiously explosive. The well-known French actor, Michel Vitold, is silkily refined as the older man who is most severely upset by the young man. Hector Alterio, of Argentina and Spain, has sympathy and humor. The fourth man is Italian, Omero Antonutti, familiar from *Padre Padrone* and *The Night of the Shooting Stars*. Here he moves from his gnarled peasant quality in those films to another sort of buried hardness. Gabriele Ferzetti, unforgettable still as the middle-aging architect in *L'Avventura*, makes a brief, touching appearance as a contemporary of the older men.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Hippolytus Can Feel!

It has sometimes been said of Tom Stoppard, by others besides me, that there is nothing going on beneath the glossy, slippery surface of his bright ideas and arch dialogue. With *The Real Thing* (Plymouth Theater), he has decided to confound his more skeptical critics by chipping a hole in the ice for us to peek through—under the proper conditions, no doubt, suitable also for fishing. You've probably heard by now what's swimming around this chilly pond. The "real thing" is Stoppard's amorous equivalent of the "right stuff"—grace and style in the performance of a difficult task, in this case conducting erotic relationships.

The Real Thing
by Tom Stoppard

In short, Britain's leading intellectual entertainer is now exhibiting a highly publicized, well-congratulated capacity not just for verbal and literary pyrotechnics but also for feeling, in that his characters can actually experience such human emotions as jealousy, envy, sorrow, and passion. Hearing these exotic emotions expressed, I was reminded of Racine's *Phèdre*, where the lovesick heroine has been assuming all the while that Hippolytus is frigid, only to discover that he has actually been in love with the young Aricie. "Hippolytus can feel!" says the astonished Phèdre, "but not for me." Mr. Stoppard's aberrational display of sentience left me equally bereft and isolated.

The Real Thing begins with a scene from *House of Cards*, a love triangle written by a successful playwright named Henry, enacted by his actress wife, Charlotte, and his actor friend, Max. Brittle enough to be a genuine piece of Stoppard invention, this is nevertheless not the "real thing" but rather a play-within-a-play (selections from Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* later form another of these Chinese boxes) about a man exposing his wife's adultery. After Henry's apartment comes in on a revolving turntable, we learn that the "real thing" is actually about the adultery of a husband. Henry has been having it off with Max's wife, Annie, another actress, though one with a bit of social conscience—she has befriended a young soldier arrested for arson at an antimissile demonstration. By the second act, Henry has left Charlotte and moved in with Annie.

When Max learns of Annie's infidelity, he cries. Henry, who finds Max's misery "in not very good taste," also cries when he discovers later that Annie has betrayed him as well with a young actor. Obviously, Hippolytus can feel—but Stoppard is less interested in these lachrymose calisthenics than in demonstrating how it is possible to reveal sentiment without losing one's reputation as a wit. For despite the intermittent weeping, the strongest emotion in the play is a passion for the construction of sentences, and Stoppard (ignoring Max's rebuke that "having all the words is not what life's about") is never more fervid than when Henry is celebrating his own verbal felicity. Defending himself against Annie's charge that "You only write for people who would like to write like you if only they could write" (note that even his critics speak in carefully polished tropes), Henry replies that language is sacred, even if writers are not, and "If you get the right words in the right order, you can nudge the world a little."

At this point, he has been nudging the world in the direction of quietism by ridiculing soldier Brodie's loutish effort to compose a protest play. Stoppard, whose name was recently used in an ad by British conservatives praising our invasion of Grenada, is as tone deaf before the dissonant inflections of Western political protest as Henry is in the presence of serious music (though he is profoundly sensitive to stirrings of dissent in Eastern Europe). After Annie has rewarded Brodie's bad manners by administering some cocktail dip to his face like a slapstick pie, the play ends with a reconciliatory kiss between husband and wife, Henry writhing to his favorite rock record and Annie entering the bedroom to undress. Thus, love conquers all—even casual adulteries and messy social dissent.

Considering how few people can resist a sophisticated love story, *The Real Thing* is destined to be one of the big hits of the Broadway season, and, when the rights are released, a reigning favorite of middlebrow theater companies. I found it rather coldhearted in its good-natured way, a frozen trifle with little aftertaste. Stoppard has doubtless made some effort to examine his own personal and literary problems, and his writing is rarely defensive or self-serving. But despite the autobiographical yeast leavening the familiar digestible cake mix, *The Real Thing* is just another clever exercise in the Mayfair mode, where all of the characters (the proletarian Brodie excepted) share the same wit, artifice, and ornamental diction. Even Henry's teen-age daughter, at the very moment that she is teasing her father for writing always about "infidelity among the architect class," is fashioning sentences ("Exclusive rights isn't love," she says, "it's colonization") apparently designed for inclusion in a Glossary of Post-Restoration Epigrams. No wonder Stoppard has her refer to herself as "virgo syntacta."

I think I might be less immune to the charms of this admittedly harmless piece of trivia were it not being tarted up everywhere to pass for, well, the real thing. It comes no closer to reality

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than any of those other adultery plays recently exported from England—and it doesn't even possess the mordancy of Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* or the ingenuity of Peter Nichols's *Passion*. Born in Czechoslovakia, Stoppard has managed to perfect an expatriate's gift for mimicry—allied to his ear for language is his unique capacity to imitate playwriting styles. But if he began his career impersonating Beckett and Pirandello (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*) or Bernard Shaw (*Jumpers*) or Joyce and Wilde (*Travesties*), he has recently, along with a large number of contemporaries in the English theater, come entirely under the influence of Noel Coward's witty sangfroid. The question is whether this is a style more appropriate to simulating reality or creating escapism, whether, at this critical point in world history, we are more in need of rhetorical artifice—or poetic truth.

Mike Nichols's production is as beautifully manufactured as the play and, at times, equally contrived. Nichols has always gotten the best out of good actors, and his casting instinct has not failed him here. Still, there is an element of spontaneity occasionally missing from the current production—as if the cast were being corseted in Stoppard's language. Jeremy Irons, looking like a dissipated D'Artagnan, bearded and baggy eyed, has a plummy time with Henry's dialogue, and commands the stage with authentic theatrical grace, but Glenn Close, as Annie, tries too hard to charm us out of recognizing that this is one unpleasant lady. An attractive actress with auburn hair and sunken eyes, Miss Close seems at times too easily persuaded of her own radiance. She smiles too much, and she has a habit of hugging herself, which injects a strain of sentimental self-love into these rather hardhearted proceedings (it is also highly unlikely, though this may be a fault of the writing, that she would be playing the young Annabella opposite a considerably younger Giovanni in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*). As for Christine Baranski as Charlotte and Kenneth Welsh as Max, they, like the rest of the cast—and like Tony Walton's scenery, Tharon Musser's lighting, and Anthea Sylbert's clothes—function as well as possible to fulfill the assigned task, which is to reflect back the showy brilliance of the two leading characters, not to mention the breathtaking contrivances of their author, in his flamboyant exhibition of what it means to be "real."

The ABT revives a Balanchine classic.

MISSTEPS

BY EVA RESNIKOVA

A new Balanchine ballet is always cause for celebration, even when the work in question is nearly forty years old. For those who had not yet caught on to Balanchine by 1952, when *Symphonie concertante* (to Mozart's Sinfonia concertante for Violin and Viola, K. 364) was last danced by New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre's resurrection of this "lost" Balanchine opus is a revelation. It also offers a small measure of solace, in the face of the enormous loss the dance world has recently suffered, to know that there are other Balanchine gems stored away in the minds and bodies of his dancers, past and present, waiting to be brought to life again.

Eva Resnikova has written on dance for THE NEW REPUBLIC and *The New Criterion*.

The case of *Symphonie concertante* is unusual, though, in that it was mounted not from dancers' memories but from a long-forgotten Labanotation score discovered in the archives of the Dance Notation Bureau. Dance notation, a record made by a trained choreologist of existing choreography, consists basically of an account of steps and their correspondence to the musical counts. Though capable of translating even nonstandard positions and movements into symbols, notation cannot capture subtleties of phrasing, articulation, and other details of style. It is, moreover, an expensive and time-consuming undertaking, requiring long study and apprenticeship. Most dance works today are videotaped, if only for reasons of copyright, and a tape can serve as a convenient *aide-mémoire*. But the dancers' centuries-old method of preserving ballets in their muscular memories remains unchallenged.

Unlike the composer, who "hears" music in his mind and then translates it directly into written symbols, the choreographer cannot envision a dance work apart from its performance, cannot imagine even a single step without at the same time imagining its being executed by an individual dancer. Inevitably, then, both the peculiarities of the style in which the dancer was trained as well as his or her personal idiosyncrasies will become part of the choreography itself.

Perhaps it is making a virtue out of necessity, but style in ballet, or the way in which the steps are performed, is in many ways as significant as the steps themselves. Balanchine no doubt had this in mind when he made the statement: "The choreography, the steps, don't mean a thing." He also said: "Just do the steps." That the contradiction is only apparent is made clear by another Balanchine obiter dictum, this time in response to a question regarding the future of his creations: "Are my ballets going to be danced by dancers I don't

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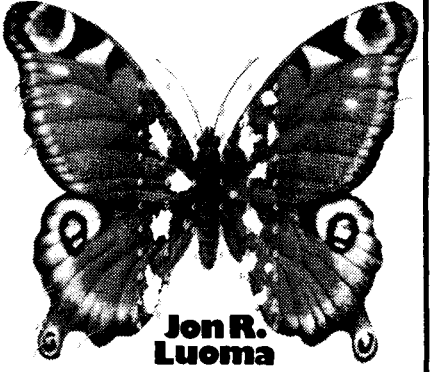

Jon R. Luoma

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know, that I haven't trained? Those won't really be my ballets." That is, if the dancers have been thoroughly trained in his style, then it is enough for them just to do the steps; if they have not, then no amount of doing the steps will make it a Balanchine ballet. Further, the more academic the choreography, the more style becomes subject matter. A ballet like the 1945 *Symphonie concertante*, which began life as a work for student performance, is practically nothing but style. Its subject matter is classicism itself, and specifically Balanchine's contemporary American view of it: straightforward, unaffected, energetic.

This approach, which should come naturally to them, eluded the ABT dancers. A distinct class division, more in the manner of a European or Soviet opera-house company, was evident: the dancing of the corps de ballet, familiar from other classical works in the company's repertory, was disciplined, uniform, correct, and utterly lifeless, while the soloists outdid each other in their attempts to inject "personality" into their dancing. The worst offender was Martine Van Hamel, who turned her performance into a battle of wills by insisting on imposing on the choreography her own conception of classical style, which had nothing to do with Balanchine's, and whose running commentary on the text—eyes rising heavenward, lips parting in ecstasy—was unseemly.

Most important, the dancing lacked the energy essential to Balanchine's style. That the ABT dancers are not by nature lethargic is evident from their performances in ballets whose music and choreography are openly based on jazz, such as Jerome Robbins's 1958 sneakers ballet *U.S. Export: Opus Jazz*. But they do not seem to be able to infuse classicism with the same energy, which is precisely what Balanchine's choreography requires—and which, incidentally, would also help to enliven ABT's *Swan Lake* and other nineteenth century classical works in their repertory. The spirit of sanctimony in which they approach their classical heritage is deadly.

THE MOST serious stylistic shortcoming of the *Symphonie concertante* is the lack of variation of impetus in the dancing. One of Balanchine's greatest innovations was his variation of the impetus not just within an enchaînement (what is commonly meant by phrasing) but within each step—within, even, a movement as basic as the opening of a leg or an arm. By attacking a movement forcefully and then attenuating it, not only is the simplest gesture given a new coloring, but the dancer arrives at her destination with enough time left (we are speaking here of micro-seconds) to establish the pose before going on to the next. This ability to articulate is what gives to the Balanchine dancer that distinctive sense of elegant calm at any speed. It allows her to perform the most rapid allegro without appearing rushed, and it imparts vitality to adagio work, which is why Balanchine's adagios never drag. (ABT's *Swan Lake* Act II adagio, now taken by all of their ballerinas at the numbingly slow tempo favored by Makarova, could do with a large dose of this vitality.)

There are some promising dancers at American Ballet Theatre, particularly among those too young to have settled permanently into the prevailing company style. Let us hope that they will avoid ever doing so, for it does not appear to be a promising one. This is the first time in the company's history that it has had a style; it was always a grab bag of glamorous foreign names and homegrown dependables backed by a motley corps. One is almost tempted to look back upon those days—over which many of us complained bitterly—and regret the passing of its peculiar charm.

BARYSHNIKOV'S intentions on becoming ABT's artistic director in 1980 were clear: weed out the deadwood, discipline the corps de ballet, impose a uniform style. That the style he chose was essentially the one with which he grew up at the Kirov in Leningrad should not surprise; his own dancing betrays little influence of the fifteen months he spent at City Ballet. By nature a demicaractère dancer with a strong comedic bent, Baryshnikov always seemed somewhat at a loss in works without either an overt dramatic situation or bravura tricks. The throwaway wit and casual elegance of Balanchine's *Rubies* (to Stravinsky's Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra) eluded him; the most he managed over the length of his performances was to tone down his acting and to attenuate the violence of his attack. To see Baryshnikov really in his element today, watch him carrying on in Twyla Tharp's *Push Comes to Shove*, subtly reworked by the choreographer to reflect Baryshnikov's new position of power in the company.

Trying to re-create American Ballet Theatre in the stylistic image of the Kirov is wrong not only because it is inappropriate for contemporary American dancers but because this style is not a progressive one. Dance language is enriched in the rehearsal studio, not in the classroom, and Soviet Russia has had no choreographers able—or permitted—to experiment in that direction. This is, after all, one of the factors that led Baryshnikov and his fellows to defect. On coming to the West, Baryshnikov, like a child let loose in a candy store, essayed every genre of dance that had been denied him in the Soviet Union. This promiscuity (the defector's idea of freedom) has been carried over into his programming for ABT: as artistic director he has opened wide his company doors not only to hybrid modern-ballet expressionist choreographers like Glen Tetley and Jiri Kylian but to strictly modern-dance choreographers like Merce Cunningham and Paul Taylor.

Such eclecticism in programming

REVISION

He riffles manuscripts
from years so far behind
he recalls them only,
here and there, as a lifting
of the eye, a distant
dry spark across the neck
where once his skin had learned
to expect such burning gifts.

Pausing to read one sheet
he discovers verses
immeasurably bad,
but then, just halfway down,
discerns one line of thought
still equal to his need—
except for one wrong word,
an *a* that should be *the*.

He pencils in the change,
then drops a hundred sheets
back down upon this one
and packs them all away.
Across the yard and fields,
the orange sun cracks upward
as if it sensed the broad expanse
whose darkness it would fill.

STEPHEN COREY

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may help to fill theaters, but it does little for a company's classical style. The pernicious effects of Tetley-type choreography on classical dancing were sadly evident during the week-long visit of England's Royal Ballet last April. The undifferentiated flux that is the hallmark of this style is in direct opposition to the articulation that classical dancing requires, even in legato passages. It is difficult to blame dancers for their inability to articulate and to vary the emphasis of their attack in classical dancing when they are required so often to do just the opposite.

In the end, the audience that spends an evening attending a performance that includes Cunningham's *Duets* and Balanchine's *Symphonie concertante* is getting neither authentic Cunningham nor authentic Balanchine. Not only are the audience, the choreographers, and the dancers being done a disservice, but so is classical style, which ABT—as our self-appointed keeper of the nineteenth-century classical ballet flame—should certainly feel some sort of moral responsibility to uphold.

THE END OF REPUBLICAN ECONOMICS

The Supply-Side Revolution: An Insider's Account of Policymaking in Washington by Paul Craig Roberts

(Harvard University Press, 328 pp., $18.50)

Presidential Economics: The Making of Economic Policy from Roosevelt to Reagan and Beyond by Herbert Stein

(Simon and Schuster, 414 pp., $16.95)

Presidents typically try to arrange things so the economy booms in the last year of their term of office. Most don't succeed so well as Ronald Reagan. Some would say that luck was on his side; OPEC crumbled, world commodity prices declined, the recession-depression of 1981-82 was so severe that the bounce back has been vigorous. But unemployment and insecurity still dog vast numbers of Americans. The boom's benefits, like the bust's burdens, have fallen disproportionately. And the recovery may not last long beyond next election day. Ronald Reagan is vulnerable on the economy. The new voters now surging into the electorate know that the recovery is not for them.

If the Democrats succeed in offering an economic vision responsive to this new political reality, they may well sweep Congress and the White House in 1984. If instead they seek easy political advantage in berating Reagan for his huge budget deficit—as some Democrats want to do—they may just squeak by. The deficit is cause for worry; a healthy society cannot live long with $200 billion a year in red ink "for as far as the eye can see," in the words of Budget Director David Stockman. But a new Democratic economics cannot and should not be built on public austerity and private investment. To see why, we have only to look at recent history.

In the 1960s Democrats successfully married the modern welfare state to principles of Keynesian demand-management of the economy. The spectacular performance of the American economy during that decade seemed to demonstrate that active government intervention was not just compatible with prosperity but essential to it. Tax and credit policies encouraged mass consumption; social programs and government regulations simultaneously tidied up some of the messier side effects of unrestrained capitalism. The overriding goals of economic policy were to encourage growth while keeping unemployment low. Inflation could be tamed through "jawboning" industry leaders to reduce their price increases; if necessary, wages and prices could be controlled directly.

Republican economics, by contrast, stressed fiscal austerity, budget balancing, and monetary restraint. But these notions had little political appeal. They would have less as time wore on. By 1971 when the strains of Vietnam and Great Society spending, coupled with the start of vigorous international competition, had pushed inflation to 5 percent, unemployment to 6 percent, and the prime rate to 6.5 percent, Richard Nixon proclaimed himself a Keynesian and proceeded to clamp wage and price controls on the economy. When inflation hit 12 percent in 1974, Gerald Ford urged the nation to wear WIN buttons ("Whip Inflation Now") and tighten our collective belts; in the subsequent recession unemployment reached 9 percent. In 1976, with the economy safely in recovery, Ford once again reverted to traditional Republican economics and sought to balance the budget by restraining the growth of government spending; unemployment edged upward again.

By January of 1977, when Jimmy Carter took office, 7.4 percent of the nation's work force was unemployed. Carter duly set out to stimulate the economy with an ambitious spending program and calls for the Federal Re-

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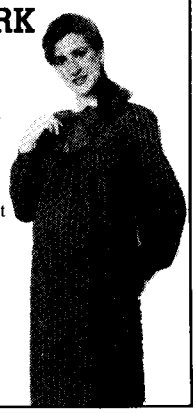

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serve to expand the money supply. Two years later inflation accelerated to 13.3 percent. The average annual rise in worker output per hour, having already declined over the preceding decade, continued to plummet.

It was at this point that Republican economics reappeared. On October 6, 1979, Paul Volcker, the Carter-appointed chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, announced a change of procedures. From now on the board would pay more attention to controlling bank reserves and less to controlling interest rates. The primary goal of economic policy was now to fight inflation. Jimmy Carter agreed. His January 1980 *Economic Report* stated that inflation was the number one problem, requiring fiscal and monetary restraint. Unemployment again edged upward.

Ronald Reagan became President of the United States with the votes of only 28.8 percent of all those who were eligible to vote (a level of support comparable to that garnered by Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and Wendell Willkie in 1940). Jimmy Carter became the first elected incumbent President since Herbert Hoover to lose a reelection, capturing only 22.6 percent of the eligible vote—one of the smallest fractions ever obtained by any Presidential candidate. All told, the 1980 voter turnout was one of the lowest in recent American history.

POOR AND working-class citizens stayed home on election day 1980. Of the 76.5 million eligible voters who failed to vote, three-quarters were from households below the median income. While 71 percent of white-collar workers said they voted in the 1980 election, only 48 percent of blue-collar workers said so; 80 percent of eligible voters with a college education, but only 59 percent of those whose education ended with high school; 68 percent of those who own their own homes, but only 45 percent of tenants; 62 percent of those with steady jobs, but only 41 percent of the unemployed.

The election of 1980 did not signal an ideological transformation of the American people. It represented an overwhelming rejection of both candidates, a repudiation of American politics. The Republicans did not exactly win; it may be more accurate to say that the Democrats lost. Jimmy Carter gave poor and working-class Americans no reason to vote, in large part because he offered them no alternative to Republican economics. Indeed, of the blue-collar voters who bothered to go to the polls, record numbers deserted the Democrats. On the core economic issues of how the burdens and benefits of inflation, unemployment, and economic growth were to be distributed, Jimmy Carter proved himself by the end to be the most conservative Democratic President since Grover Cleveland left the White House in 1896.

RONALD REAGAN has failed to balance the budget, but in every other way he has hewed to traditional Republican economics. Reaganomics is but an offshoot of the old trunk. We now have two books which make this abundantly clear, both of them by disgruntled Republican policy advisers. In *The Supply-Side Revolution*, Paul Craig Roberts, a progenitor of supply-side economics, who briefly became an Assistant Treasury Secretary in the Reagan Administration, laments the loss of Ronald Reagan to the traditional Republican economists who have dominated the Reagan White House from the start. His revealing book documents the rise and fall of the idea of a supply-side tax cut, from Congressional infighting in 1976 to White House infighting in 1983. In *Presidential Economics*, Herbert Stein, perhaps the most traditional of Republican economists, who served under Nixon and Ford, laments the failure of Reagan to adhere more faithfully to the traditional conservative creed. His tendentious and mildly tedious book chronicles postwar Republican economics, beginning with the Eisenhower Administration. Together the books define the outer boundaries of Reaganomics, and place it in its historical context. Unwittingly they reveal why it promises so little to the majority of Americans of modest means.

Both books make it clear that before the 1976 election Ronald Reagan was a budget balancer. In the primary campaign he proposed that federal expenditures be cut $90 billion as a precondition for cutting taxes. The speech was used by his opponents within the party as evidence that he was another Goldwater who would surely be repudiated by the electorate. His conversion came two years later when he was one of the first Republican candidates to endorse the Kemp-Roth tax-cut bill, which already was gaining momentum in Congress. By the 1980 campaign he was a true believer in the power of a tax cut to release the energies of America and generate extraordinary economic growth.

Once in office, however, Reagan was captured again by the traditionalists, according to Paul Craig Roberts's version. David Stockman wanted to balance the budget before cutting taxes because he wanted to preserve for himself a leading role in economic policy making through trimming government expenditures; Murray Weidenbaum at the Council of Economic Advisors feared that the tax cuts would spur inflation; White House advisers James Baker and Richard Darman worried about the political consequences of large deficits and also feared that a supply-side victory would make Jack Kemp a prime contender for Presidential succession. Only Treasury Secretary Donald Regan and his loyal underlings held to the faith, but it was hopeless. Budget-cutting became the priority, reducing the deficit emerged as the overriding goal. The supply-side tax cuts were delayed and compromised. When the first installment was passed, but before it took effect, Republican traditionalists like Herbert Stein warned that inflation would accelerate. Reacting to these fears, Paul Volcker then tightened the growth of the money supply to near zero, pushing up real interest rates to their highest levels in the nation's history. The economy died. The deficit ballooned. By September of 1981 Reagan was proposing a $22 billion tax increase euphemistically called a "revenue enhancer." Guerrilla war raged on between the Treasury's true believers and the White House staff for another year. But in his January 1983 State of the Union Address, Reagan proposed a large contingency tax increase in the event that deficits did not decline. All was lost.

HERBERT STEIN'S version of all this is slightly different. Supply-side claims never had firm empirical support. Reagan went along with the original tax cut and has continued to resist tax increases, says Stein, on the assumption that keeping revenues low eventually would force Congress—fearing large deficits—to cut the government's nondefense expenditures. This was the basic objective all along. But the assumption has been proven wrong. Neither branch has been willing to take responsibility for the deficit, which initially threatened another bout

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of wild inflation (until Paul Volcker wisely choked off the money supply) and which now threatens to crowd out productive investment and perpetuate even larger deficits in the future. Reagan's initial tax-cut and defense-spending spree vitiated an opportunity to restore the nation to a noninflationary fiscal policy. Therein lies the lost promise of the Reagan revolution.

WHOSE VERSION is correct? Does tax-cutting or budget-cutting lie at the heart of Reaganomics? Which are more dangerous—high taxes or yawning deficits? Such questions continue to divide Republicans, supply-siders from traditionalists. They have bedeviled the White House, causing Reagan to vacillate between the two camps and satisfy neither.

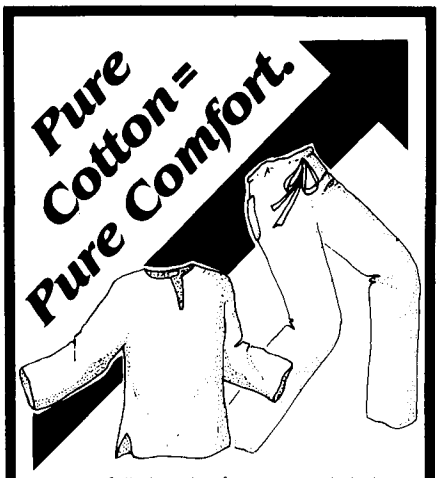
These questions are not without interest. But the debate is curious for what it leaves out. Take unemployment, for example. Supply-siders assert that a newly energized, tax-relieved economy will sweep up the unemployed even at low inflation. Republican traditionalists, on the other hand, concede that to wring inflation out of the economy will require a "transitional" period of substantial unemployment, but that this is a one-time-only price to be paid for low inflation, low unemployment, and sustained growth thereafter. Neither side has any evidence to support its claims. But note that for both sides reducing unemployment is a residual goal, coming a distant third after spurring private investment and taming inflation. Not that the social pain of unemployment is to be ignored, just that it can best be remedied indirectly, through the workings of the market, once the market is again working as it should. Government should not try to tackle it directly.

Also missing from the conservative calculus is the role of public investment. Both supply-siders and traditionalists assume that private investment is key to renewed growth. Government should get out of the way. There is no mention in either of these books—or within the economic philosophies from which they draw—of the government's critical responsibilities for educating people, providing job training and retraining to those who cannot obtain it elsewhere, ensuring the health and safety of the nation's children, supporting research and fostering commercial applications of such research, nurturing new businesses in regions of the country whose older industries have become technologically or internationally obsolete, building and maintaining our systems of roads and bridges and ports, ensuring adequate public sanitation and water and air quality, promoting positive relationships between management and labor, maintaining vigorous domestic competition. These, too, are investments in our collective future. Indeed, given the speed and dexterity with which private financial capital now surges around the globe, it is quite probable that the future well-being of this or any other nation will depend on the capacities of its work force and the strength of its social organization than any particular level of private investment in plant and equipment.

Nor, finally, do we find any mention of social equity. In this view of things, economic policy has nothing to do with distributive justice. Herbert Stein graciously concedes that the government should take some responsibility for the "very poor," but he makes no mention of those at the lowest rungs of the work force who invariably bear the worst side effects of his traditional anti-inflationary medicine; they are of course the first to lose their jobs. Paul Craig Roberts finds nothing objectionable about a tax cut that benefits the rich more than the poor. After all, he argues, efforts to achieve redistribution through the tax system discourage the rich from earning taxable income, and thereby hurt everyone. Neither side of the Republican debate perceives that gross inequalities of income and wealth are bad in and of themselves, that our society is absolutely the worse for them.

UNEMPLOYMENT, public investment, maldistribution: these are the blind spots in Republican economics, and we didn't need two books to tell us so. We have only to look at the past four and a half years, since Jimmy Carter adopted Republican economics, to see the results. Unemployment reached double digits. Last year one out of every five workers went some time without a job. We now have the highest level of unemployment during the first year of a recovery in the postwar era. Public investment has been slashed: federal spending on education and job training, for example, is down 17 percent in real terms since the last year of the Carter Administration. And by all accounts poverty is on the rise. The Census Bureau reports that the number of Americans in poverty increased from 13 percent of the population (or 29.3 million people) in 1980 to 15 percent in 1982 (34.4 million). In a recent study, economists Peter Gottschalk and Sheldon Danzinger conclude that despite the economy's robust growth this year, the poverty rate will decline less than one-half a percentage point. Thirty-six percent of black Americans now fall under the poverty line, three times the rate for whites; 21.7 percent of all children are now impoverished, 47.5 percent of black children. These are the worst rates in seventeen years. Even if Medicare and food stamps are included in the reckoning, over 21 million Americans are still impoverished, substantially more than four years ago. Neither Ronald Reagan's cuts in social spending nor Paul Volker's monetarist war on inflation is solely responsible for this trend by any means, but both have contributed to it.

What is worse, the distribution of burdens and benefits appears to be growing more lopsided. According to Urban Institute researchers Frank Levy and Richard Michel, the richest one-fifth of American families will be but a



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fraction of 1 percent poorer in 1984 than they were in 1979, but the poorest one-fifth will suffer a decline of almost 10 percent, even including welfare and food stamps. Relatively speaking, the rich are growing much richer.

ONCE AGAIN, Republican economics should not bear the full blame; some of this trend can be explained by demographic shifts toward more young, elderly, and female-headed households on the one hand, and growing numbers of professional couples on the other. But it is also true that over the last five years tax burdens have increased more rapidly for poor and working-class people than for the rich; Reagan's big tax cuts, mostly for the well-to-do, have been matched by large increases in Social Security, payroll, and sales taxes, falling relatively more heavily on those of modest means. And the current Administration has done nothing to reverse the rapid loss of blue-collar industrial jobs across America, which had supported much of the working class. Indeed, the Administration's Panglossian attitude toward international competition and national industrial policy is rapidly propelling a sizable chunk of our labor force into clerical, retail, custodial, and low-wage assembly jobs.

As economic policy transforms social reality, so social reality transforms politics. Poor and working-class Americans will not stay home on election day 1984 as they did in 1980. Too much is at stake. The 1982 mid-term election was a bellwether. Forty-one percent of eligible voters turned out, the highest for any off year since the late 1960s.

Poorer Americans have been organizing. During the past three years over 1 million blacks have registered to vote, the vast majority of them poor and working class. That is the greatest progress in voter registration made by the black community since the early 1960s. According to the Joint Center for Political Studies, almost 10.5 million blacks are now registered, out of 17.6 million blacks of voting age. Black mayors have been elected in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, the nation's second, third, and fourth largest cities, respectively. There are now almost fifty-five hundred elected black officeholders in the United States, up 10 percent from 1980. The National Coalition on Black Voter Participation is now seeking to add another 2 million blacks to the rolls. Another organization called SERVE (Service Employees Registration, Voting, and Education Campaign) is on the way to registering 3 million poor people as they apply to government agencies for benefits. Consider that in 1980 Ronald Reagan's margin of victory in eleven states was less than the number of unregistered blacks in each state. (In New York State alone Reagan beat Carter by 165,459 votes; if the approximately half a million unregistered blacks in New York had registered and voted, the outcome no doubt would have been different. The implication of all of this is clear. Poorer Americans can put a Democrat in the White House in 1984.

This century's early Republican hegemony lasted until 1932. The "system of 1896," as Walter Dean Burnham calls it, referring to William McKinley's victory over William Jennings Bryan, destroyed two-party competition in much of the United States. For over thirty-five years the Republicans completely dominated New England and the Midwest, an area comprising just over half of the nation's population at the beginning of the century and almost all of its industrial and financially generated wealth. Under this hegemony, poor and working-class Americans had little incentive to vote. Their votes would make little difference. The entry of poorer Americans into the electorate in 1932 was due to acute economic hardship and the promise of Franklin Delano Roosevelt that he would give them a new deal.

Democrats may not rise to the occasion, of course. Democratic candidates may yet kill off one another in a bitter, fratricidal contest; Jesse Jackson's unwillingness to "rule out" a third party challenge bodes ill. But perhaps a greater danger is that Democrats will fail to separate themselves clearly from Republican economics, as they failed to do in 1980. The present economic boom is no boon to many of the poor and working-class voters now swarming into the electorate. The values at the heart of Republican economics have not changed. The values at the heart of Democratic economics, too, must not change.

ROBERT B. REICH

KING LOUIS I

Louis Armstrong: An American Genius by James Lincoln Collier

(Oxford University Press, 383 pp., $19.95)

James Lincoln Collier might be the only practicing jazz instrumentalist (he plays the trombone) who's also a critic, a scholar, a historian, and an ardent fan of the music. No similar example comes readily to mind. And, in all but a few respects, his biography of Louis Armstrong is well served by the unusual mix of his qualifications and enthusiasms. Even in the places where it isn't so well served, Collier is merely overwhelming with certain dispensable displays of expertise. Such instances include those long blow-by-blow or note-by-note accounts of recording sessions that do not add much to our imagination of Armstrong and his work, but merely impress us with the author's skills at technical exegesis and analysis. Nonetheless, Collier has written a solid, nearly definitive, life of Louis Armstrong. It could be a long time before we are given a more detailed, comprehensive, perceptive, and human portrait of the great Satchmo. Collier is not throwing a big and uncritical bouquet at Louis. He's tough in parts, where the record or his judgment requires him to be. But beyond his strictures and reservations, he is clearly and strongly of the view that Armstrong was a genius of twentieth-century music.

Many readers of his book will be surprised to find themselves reflecting on the ironic and the paradoxical in Armstrong's life and character. We haven't been used to thinking about him in those terms. From what we heard in his playing or saw of his conduct on the stage, no personal life seemed less complicated by irony and paradox. He sounded so pure and melodious in feel-

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ing, seemed so direct and generous in expression, that few of us wished to look that wonderful gift horse in the mouth—to see whether his fluency sprang from anything other than a natural verve and cheerfulness. If anything about him gave us pause, it was the excessive ardor of his desire to please and to entertain; for we knew that he was pleasing and entertaining enough without those strenuous comic antics—that caused some of his dearest admirers to worry that he was carrying on a bit too much like an Uncle Tom.

Of course, we're thinking here chiefly about the later Armstrong, the one who emerged—who began to let it all hang out—from about the early 1930s to the time of his death in 1971. There was an earlier and less clownish Armstrong, dating from 1922—when he left his native New Orleans to join Joe Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in Chicago—to the end of the decade, when he began giving in more fully to comic display and ingratiating entertainment.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG IN THE OLIVER BAND

From 1922 to 1929, he was the most serious, inventive, and influential horn player in the nation, admired and copied by every rising jazz instrumentalist. A number of the recordings he made during that decade—with his Hot Five and Hot Seven combos—were, and still are, regarded as the first to elevate jazz to the status of musical art. Not that the idea of art interested him so much. He left that to the critics and the intellectuals of jazz. He cared mostly about his feeling for music and his technical mastery of the instrument he played. It is said—and we are to concur—that he never played so memorably and impressively again after 1928, when he recorded "West End Blues," a marvelous little essay in sadness and resignation—though not so sad as to obscure his genius for melodic expression. "West End Blues," Collier writes, is "one of the masterworks of twentieth-century music, a moment of time frozen and held that will endure as long as music does." It is one of the ironies of Armstrong's career that he should have begun, soon thereafter, to lose interest in the kind of playing that gained him recognition as the leading creative artist in the field of jazz. He turned increasingly instead to sheer entertainment. By the end of his life he had become a legend mostly among people who knew or cared little about the seriousness of his early music. Indeed, one of his last and greatest hits was the pop Broadway tune "Hello Dolly."

Despite his worldwide fame and considerable wealth, Armstrong was dogged throughout his life by a feeling that he wasn't good enough as a person—by what Collier calls a sense of "worthlessness." This wasn't because of his color, necessarily, but chiefly because of the roughness and obscurity of his childhood in New Orleans which left a mark on his whole life. Toward the end of his career, Armstrong, then in ill health, refused to cancel an engagement that had been booked for him at the Waldorf Astoria. He bombed; at any rate, he was mercilessly panned by a television commentator. After listening to the devastating TV review, in the company of Joe Scully, a booking agent, Armstrong looked sadly at Scully and said, "But you'll still book me, huh, Joe?" Collier: "After all the adulation, the hit records, the performances for crowned heads; after all the awards, the thousands of newspaper stories, the features in *Life*, and the cover of *Time*, the scholarly articles in jazz journals; after the dozens of movies, scores of television appearances, thousands of radio broadcasts; after it all, so little faith did he have in his own worth that he could be destroyed by one review tossed off by an obscure commentator and forgotten five minutes later by everyone who heard it. It is a pathetic story, and it is pathetic precisely because the pain Armstrong felt was real. Nothing he had done had finally healed that wound carved into him in boyhood." Popular applause had become the oxygen of his self-esteem, more so than any memory of his serious accomplishments.

Given the conditions of his boyhood, Armstrong's constant lust for popular approval was as understandable as his serious contributions to the history of music were improbable. Born in grinding poverty, abandoned at an early age by his father, he grew up insecure and barely literate. According to Collier, he came into the world "at a time when the position of blacks in the South was worse than it had been at any time since slavery." Collier, who believes that Armstrong was born around 1898—rather than in 1900, as Louis always claimed—goes on to say: "He was condemned from birth to live out his life as a menial laborer, always poor, never sure that a job would last beyond the day, or that he would not be cheated out of his wages." He was raised partly

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in a section of New Orleans called "the Battlefield"—with its hustlers, whores, drunks, drug addicts, bordellos, honky tonks, knife fights, shootings, and occasional killings. "Oh, danger was dancing all around you back then," he was later to say. His mother, pursuing her own mysterious ways of making a living, was often too busy to take good enough care of him. He got into trouble—shooting off a pistol in the streets—and was sent to a waifs' home, where he learned to play the cornet. Yet he was fortunate to be growing up in New Orleans, "the most musical city in the U.S.," where he was "bathed in live music from birth, music that was real and made by people who could be emulated in the same way a child emulates a parent." The city teemed with black musicians, playing in street parades, funeral struts, excursion riverboats, dance halls, and honky tonks. And it was on some of those occasions and in some of those places that young Armstrong first heard the greats of New Orleans jazz, men like Bunk Johnson, Buddy Bolden, Freddie Keppard, Kid Ory, and—to him, the best of them all—Joe Oliver.

There were other early influences as well on what was to become the Armstrong musical style. He loved singing and melody, and had a natural ear for harmony. Among the boys he grew up with, he had had to be risky and adventuresome. Raised around elders who expressed their feelings spontaneously, he learned to play with clarity of tone and honesty of emotion. Because of the harsh conditions of his upbringing, he developed a sense of the blues, touched with the humor or comic stances by which blacks of his time and place both deflected and mastered pain. All those and other influences united perfectly in the unique sound of his horn and music. That was evident when he blew his earliest professional gigs in New Orleans; and it was even more evident in Chicago, where he began playing in 1922—his idol Joe Oliver (who had preceded him to the Windy City) having sent for him to come up and join the Creole Jazz Band.

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THOUGH Armstrong was already an accomplished cornet player when he arrived in Chicago (it was some time later that he shifted to the trumpet), his role in the Creole Jazz Band was modest and subdued. With Oliver, the leader and first cornetist of the band, that's the way it had to be: he wasn't about to yield too much of his solo spotlight to his young and gifted protegé. But Armstrong had no difficulty accepting such an arrangement. For all his wonderful talent, he was shy and unassertive, and was satisfied with what few choruses Oliver allowed him. We aren't sure how he then compared his own playing with Oliver's; but if he considered himself by then to be the better instrumentalist, it is a feeling he would have kept to himself—for he still looked up to the senior cornetist as one of the idols of his youth. Besides, with his lack of self-assurance, he viewed Oliver—a tall and powerful-looking man—as a protective big brother or as the authoritative father figure he never had. Despite his muted and secondary role in the Oliver band, however, Armstrong played with astonishing brilliance when the chances came his way. This "bashful, humble man," Collier writes, "could walk onto a stage before thousands of people and pour out chorus after chorus of soaring, intense music, audacious as sky rockets, so confident that other musicians scattered before it."

But it was in 1925—when Armstrong left Chicago to spend a few months with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra in New York—that his genius began to flower and to attract the wider notice it deserved. Henderson, who discovered and developed many talents of the day, had long admired the young man's musicianship; and he now gave Armstrong far more freedom and exposure—in all but his gravelly voiced singing—than Oliver had given him in Chicago. Louis was soon recognized as a star in his own right, especially when he began to be heard on the radio all over the United States. Almost all the up-and-coming horn players who heard him—trumpeters like Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart, Roy Eldridge, Bunny Berigan, Mugsy Spanier, "Hot Lips" Page, Buck Clayton, Charlie Shavers, Harry James, Doc Cheatham—wanted to learn his solos and ape his style. Rex Stewart later recalled, "I went mad with the rest of the town. I tried to walk like him, talk like him, eat like him, sleep like him. I even bought a pair of big policeman shoes like he used to wear and stood outside his apartment waiting for him to come out so I could look like him."

After the splash he made in New York, it isn't surprising that Armstrong would want to become his own man when he returned to Chicago. And he did that by organizing jazz groups—notably the Hot Fives and the Hot Sevens—in which he was the featured instrumentalist. Between 1925 and 1929, these groups made dozens of recordings for the OKeh label, recordings (like "Cornet Chop Suey," "Hotter Than That," "I'm Not Rough," "Tight Like This," "Savoy Blues," and "West End Blues") that were, as Collier writes, "to change the shape of jazz, and with it the course of twentieth-century music." "West End Blues" was Armstrong's "finest performance and one of the greatest of all jazz records." Collier goes on to explain:

> If Armstrong had not done it before, he demonstrated now to musicians and the growing jazz public, without the possibility of argument, that jazz was something more than music to drink and dance to. With this record he showed the world once and for all that it was a music of great expressive possibilities, an art form that humans could profitably spend their lives exploring without investigating all of the unknown territories.

WHEN the Great Depression struck, some of the best jazz players in Chicago were thrown out of work. Kid Ory, the trombonist, began running a chicken farm. Sidney Bechet, the clarinetist, turned to tailoring. Johnny Dodds, another clarinetist, drove taxi cabs for a living. Armstrong, for whom there could be no other life but music, took off for New York City—the entertainment capital of the nation, where he was regarded as a jewel, and where, even during the hard times, night clubs and cabarets were still jumping.

With the Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings behind him, he was now "a mature and finished artist," Collier

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judges. His "command of his instrument was complete, his confidence was certain, and his creative genius was at a towering peak." He was the leading man in jazz, "its hero." But two major roads of Armstrong's style and past now converged. From one direction, there was his love for playing before live audiences, which satisfied the comic and purely entertaining sides of his personality. From another direction, there was the serious and inventive work he had done as a recording artist—so satisfying to creative musicians, sophisticated jazz fans, and the intelligentsia of jazz criticism. In choosing to follow the former road, Armstrong not only deserted the path of serious artistry but surrendered to one of the deep and abiding needs of his character. "There was a great deal of street hustler in him," Marshall Brown, a musician, has recalled. After referring to Armstrong's "notion of pleasing an audience, and Uncle Tomming as he did," Marshall added that "he wanted applause." Armstrong himself once said to the trumpeter Ruby Braff, "Anyone can steal anything but my applause." In the early years of the Depression, when he was steering his career decidedly in the direction of applause, no one was more encouraging than Joe Glaser, his manager and financial genius. Glaser urged him to clown and "make faces," to "forget all the goddam critics" and their talk about serious artistry. "Play for the public," Glaser said. "sing and play and smile. Smile, goddamit, smile. Give it to them." And that's mostly what Armstrong did for the remainder of his career.

IF THAT IS part of what was generally seen and deplored as Armstrong's Uncle Tomming, there is no single or simple explanation of it. There seems to have been more to it than a need for approval. Very often, what looked like Tomming was merely a mask, behind which he protected and preserved the heart of his humanity. Dizzy Gillespie, a modern and radical dissenter from the Armstrong style of playing and entertaining, came gradually to perceive that after watching Armstrong over a number of years. Dizzy has said, "If anybody asked me about a certain public image of him, handkerchief over his head, grinning in the face of white racism, I never hesitated to say I didn't like it. . . . Later on, I began to recognize what I had considered Pops' grinning in the face of white racism as his absolute refusal to let anything, even anger about racism, steal the joy from his life."

That joy seems not to have been stolen, either from his life or from his instrument—not by mere mortals, at any rate. During one of his last illnesses, he insisted—against the advice of his physician—on playing what he could not have known would be his final gig. "Louie," the doctor warned, "you could drop dead while you're performing." That was of no matter, Armstrong replied: "My whole life, my whole soul, my whole spirit is to blooow that hoorn. I've got bookings arranged and the people are waiting for me. I got to do it, Doc, I got to do it." He did it. It knocked him back onto his sick bed. And he never recovered.

When he died—still singing such blithe songs as "Hello Dolly" and "Blueberry Hill"—many of his admirers thought of him chiefly as a joyful entertainer. As Collier points out, few among the tens of millions who mourned him recognized his true significance—perhaps "the preeminent musical genius of his era." It is an impetuous claim, and Collier may have some explaining to do among other scholars and qualified judges of the century's music, who are likely to feel that the conspicuous distinction Collier accords Armstrong ought to be reserved for a composer, not an instrumentalist. At any rate, we do not substantially diminish Satchmo's standing by simply saying that he was, especially in his early years, among the preeminent musical geniuses of his era.

JERVIS ANDERSON

Jervis Anderson is a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. He is the author of *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) and *This Was Harlem: 1900-1950* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

EINE KLEINE LOVE AFFAIR?

Mozart and Constanze
by Francis Carr

(Franklin Watts, 186 pp., $12.95)

Mozart and Magdalena would have been a more pertinent title, since Mr. Carr adds nothing either to fact or to observation about the composer and his wife, but makes Magdalena the central figure of what, if true, would be the most sensational episode in musical biography, the lives of Stradella and the other Italian uxoricides not excepted. Carr does not support his hypothesis with any hard evidence; but the soft kind, of smoke indicating fire, is both plausible and persuasive.

In 1789 Mozart wrote to his Masonic brother Franz Hofdemel, chancery clerk, amateur musician (violinist), and husband of the beautiful Magdalena, Mozart's piano pupil, requesting a loan, which was granted for four months. In 1790 Mozart gave Magdalena's father a watch as collateral for a loan, a transaction that only came to light in 1956, after the death of the owner. Mozart died on December 5, 1791, and was buried the next day. After the funeral, Hofdemel attempted to kill his pregnant wife with a razor, and succeeded in killing himself with this instrument. Hofdemel's death was not reported in the Viennese papers; in the provincial ones, the date was changed to December 10. On December 21 the *Pressburger Zeitung* reported that the suicide was the result of dejection, not of jealousy—who said anything about jealousy?—and that the widow, and the widow of the late Kapellmeister Mozart, would be provided for by the Empress and Emperor, respectively. This is the entire documentation linking Mozart and the Hofdemels.

In Mr. Carr's reconstruction, Magdalena was Mozart's mistress, Hofdemel his murderer. (In June 1791 Mozart told his wife that he thought he had been poisoned by *aqua toffana* and would die

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as a result of it.) Mr. Carr, thinking that Hofdemel was driven to suicide by feelings of guilt for his alleged crime, does not consider that Magdalena, grieved by Mozart's death, might have threatened her husband with exposure, for which reason he might well have chosen silence for both of them and the unborn child whose paternity would have been in doubt.

But Magdalena survived. And from her father's home in Brno, where she had retired, she occasionally visited Vienna. At these times she stayed with the Czernys, whose son Karl was one of Beethoven's piano students. Once Magdalena asked Czerny if she could hear Beethoven play some of his music. When Czerny conveyed her request, Beethoven inquired: "Isn't that the woman who had the affair with Mozart?" In 1852 Karl Czerny repeated this story to Otto Jahn, Mozart's first comprehensive biographer. Ludwig Von Köchel, cataloguer of Mozart's works, provided Jahn with more handed-down material about Mozart and Magdalena that Jahn believed to be true but did not use, presumably because Mozart had already become a spotless divinity.

The reader should have been given the German word for the "affair" imputed to Mozart; Beethoven's noun was surely less salacious. Mr. Carr's presentation is slipshod, scamping on questions of sources, ignoring the most elementary requirements of critical and historical method, and repeating as established facts such patent myths as the meeting between Mozart and Beethoven. Mr. Carr is also painfully unaware that masterpieces are beyond praise ("superb string quintets," indeed) and that a Mozart piano concerto is not "an ideal form of personal portrait," or a portrait at all (which is not to deny that music can have supervenient pictorial and literary ends). Worse still, not all of Mr. Carr's conclusions are, as he thinks, foregone. "Not surprisingly," he writes, Magdalena "refused to divulge what happened the day after Mozart died." But many readers would be surprised if she had *not* talked about those events later in life; the truth is that we do not know whether she did or didn't, or anything else about her after the Beethoven story—he *did* play for her, according to Czerny—and the early death (in 1804) of Hofdemel's, or Mozart's, son.

The likelihood that Mozart had a mistress (or mistresses) in 1790-91 has been considered by other biographers.

MOZART BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Wolfgang's naturally amorous disposition had been constrained in adolescence and early manhood by a father vigilantly wary of the perils to the development of his son's musical gifts from attachments with the opposite sex. Mozart was strongly attracted to many of the women for whom he composed opera and concert arias, but since his feelings were not reciprocated, and since he was famous, clever, high-spirited, and had good career prospects, his biographers have been forced to accept the explanation that he must have been physically unattractive. For certainties, he was short, pockmarked, and had a large nose; and if the recently discovered Hagenauer-Barducci portrait is authentic, he was cross-eyed. In any case, he had a reputation for philandering. Constanze said that he admitted to having been unfaithful to her (tumbling housemaids), and Zelter, Mendelssohn's teacher, wrote to Goethe moralizing about the success of Mozart's creations affording him too much time for women-chasing. (Mozart wrote very little in 1790, part of the period in question, but in 1791, the other part, he was as prolific as ever.) Beneath these appearances, Mozart must be identified in some degree, if only in imagination and the choice of subject matter, with *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro*, and *Così fan tutte*.

One of Mr. Carr's arguments for the existence of a liaison between Mozart and Magdalena is that in the period when it would have taken place, Constanze was in Baden for weeks at a time taking a cure. Yet Mozart did not urge her to return and did not visit her frequently, though Baden was a journey of only seventeen miles. True, he sent her sexually tantalizing letters, and he professed jealousy, reminding her of the dangers inherent in her overtly compliant nature. The letters are direct, but the life may have moved in bricoles—Mozart was a billiard addict—for if Mozart could invent emotions, and masks for emotions, to fit the people in his operas, surely he could do the same for himself. He may well have tired of Constanze, a woman with few redeeming qualities, intellectual or otherwise, and he had been quick, perhaps vindictively quick, to perceive that her prettier and more gifted sister Aloysius, his first choice for a wife, was "a false, malicious person and a coquette." Unlike Constanze, Magdalena might have had an inkling of Mozart's genius.

But while the case for marital disaffection is credible, the one for the adulterous relationship with Magdalena presents obstacles of a practical kind. Mozart was well known in Vienna. The Emperor stopped his carriage to talk to him, and called "Bravo Mozart" to him in the theater, and he was admired and respected by music-lovers of all classes,

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who would doubtless have recognized him: he could not have kept company with Magdalena incognito. And how would she have concealed what was happening from her husband? Mr. Carr's question of whether or not the piano lessons took place in Mozart's home (where he had a valet) or hers (where she would certainly have had a maid) is of little consequence since the two residences were only a five-minute walk apart. Mr. Carr cites prominent Viennese of the time who flaunted mistresses, to show that without one Mozart would have been the odd man out. But what if his mistress was a married woman, married, moreover, to a member of the same Masonic lodge?

Mozart's finances bear on the plot. In 1789 he began to borrow substantial sums of money. The reasons for this are not apparent, and they seem not to be related to fluctuations in his income or changes in his personal habits (he was not extravagant). Constanze's cure at Baden may have been costly, yet one of Mozart's letters indicates that he was not troubled by this. The accepted explanation for the sudden and continual borrowing, that he had gambling debts, begs the question of why he had become a consistent loser. Whatever the answer may have been, Mozart's close friend Michael Puchberg, who made fifteen loans to Mozart in 1790-91, apparently knew it: in a letter to him, Mozart mentions "our personal secret." One thing is certain: Mozart could not have lavished money on Magdalena without her husband's knowledge. Perhaps another, more footloose, female should be put forward to account for Mozart's mysterious deficits, unless, of course, he and Magdalena had become victims of a blackmailer.

Mr. Carr's most absorbing chapters discuss the "cover up" ostensibly necessitated by assumptions of a causal connection between Hofdemel's death and Mozart's. The suggestion of a scandal implicating Europe's, and Vienna's, most celebrated composer had to be stifled; though his true stature was unknown, more than one member of the artistic-minded aristocracy understood that Mozart was the most gifted musician of the age. The obituary in the *Weiner Zeitung* (December 7) places him at the "pinnacle of the greatest masters." That he might be revealed as an adulterer would not have been deeply damaging, but the suicide, immediately after his death, of the husband of a young and beautiful pupil, would have been too suspicious to be dismissed.

But the crux of Mr. Carr's conclusion that a concealment took place lies in the circumstances of Mozart's burial: Mozart was not a pauper—he lived in a seven-room apartment at the time of his death—but he was buried in a pauper's grave. Baron Gottfried Van Swieten, probably the most cultivated musician among Mozart's patrons, arranged for his funeral service at St. Stephen's and his interment in an inexpensive grave at St. Mark's. Mozart was not buried there, however, but in a no-expense, communal grave, where the corpse would be difficult to exhume. Since the weather was good on December 6, the unannounced change of site seems to be the only explanation for the absence of any of Mozart's friends. According to one biographer, the gravedigger who asked Constanze to place a cross on the place of burial, and who alone knew it, was immediately replaced. (Constanze did not attend the funeral and was only induced to visit St. Mark's by her second husband seventeen years after the death of the first.) Mr. Carr attributes the obfuscations to a determination to avoid the possibility of an autopsy that might reveal poison. And poisoning *was* suspected: it was mentioned in a newspaper report, written only a week after the funeral, in faraway Berlin. Miliary fever, given as the cause of death on the death certificate—and still accepted by *The New Grove*—actually results in death only when accompanied by complications Mozart did not have.

The story of Mozart and Magdalena remains very much alive. It was the greatly embroidered subject of an 1841 novella by Leopold Shefer. *Mozart and Constanze*, a play with music by Von Suppé, published in 1874, contains the question: "Is it not known that Mozart had an affair with a woman whose husband cut his own throat?" In 1922 in the index of a biography of Constanze Mozart, Magdalena is identified as Mozart's *Geliebte* (lover). In 1932, Wolfgang Goetz published an elaboration entitled *Franz Hofdemel*. Did Magdalena confide in someone? Did Michael Puchberg? Did Mozart? Mozart was a great writer of letters, at any rate, and from time to time one still turns up.

ROBERT CRAFT

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VISITATIONS

Time After Time
by Molly Keane
(Knopf, 249 pp., $13.95)

Stones for Ibarra
by Harriet Doerr
(Viking, 214 pp., $14.95)

The literary category of "the classic," which critics are prone to invoke and readers to avoid, has never been very clear. Old, musty books come to most minds, and perhaps a politely stifled yawn to some mouths. Exactly what critics envision when they stick the label on current, shiny books is harder to say. But to judge from two recent cases, I have at least one clue: new books may well earn the fusty "classic" if their authors are suitably old and unfamiliar. Novelists Molly Keane and Harriet Doerr, who are quite old, very good, and not very well known, have both been called the authors of classics. Harriet Doerr, born in 1910, has just published her first novel, *Stones for Ibarra*, to this praise from Alice Adams: "I think in its way it is a perfect book, and will be an underground classic, at least." Molly Keane, born early in the century in Ireland, has just published a second novel, *Time After Time*, while the memory of *Good Behaviour* (1981), her unexpected return to fiction after a thirty-year silence, is still fresh. "May well become a classic among English novels," was the verdict on that creation of her old age, her first publication under her real name (M. J. Farrell was the pseudonym of her younger days) and her introduction to America.

It's impossible to predict, of course, whether such a fate will befall these books, but the impulse behind the praise is clear enough. Unlike young newcomers to fiction, elderly arrivals can't plausibly be hailed for a great promise that lies in the long years ahead. Unlike hoary literary lions, they can't be revered for an illustrious oeuvre that stretches out behind them. So instead of a bow toward past or future, the urge is to apply the test of time on the spot: call the books classics, quickly. As high praise, the acclaim is indisputably deserved by both Doerr and Keane. As true pronouncement, it's inevitably dubious. Time, after all, often plays tricks—mocks wishful predictions, buries well-crafted creations. That is in fact the unsettling truth on which both of these deft, often dark, novels turn.

As she did in *Good Behaviour*, Molly Keane writes of Irish gentry whom time has treated less than gracefully. Elderly Jasper Swift and his aging sisters April, May, and Baby June have inherited Durraghglass from their "darling Mummie" under dismal circumstances indeed. There's no money to be spent on the run-down estate. And there's no love lost among the odd lot of deformed siblings and their malodorous pets, who spend their days alternately ignoring and aggravating one another. Each Swift indulges secret, solacing illusions about the present and future, and they all nurse selective recollections of the past. Their dead Mummie is enshrined in memory as the guardian of a state of innocence—a cramped world the four of them (three virgins and a stiff widow) still inhabit. Thanks to her, "an obstinate mist of love clouded over their disabilities, accepting them and accepting an impotence towards any change in their condition."

Their cousin Leda, by contrast, haunts their hazy reminiscences as the harbinger of an unfamiliar realm of experience (they have no inkling of Leda's true status: it was her precocious passion for their father many decades earlier that drove him to suicide and banished the bewitching young guest from Durraghglass). It is her unexpected return after so many years—the Swifts have long assumed she died in a concentration camp—that disrupts their world. Blind, she sees much more than they do and schemes to disturb their memories and expose their private illusions. But the plan that begins as her revenge on the Swifts unexpectedly ends as their liberation, however limited and late in coming.

Keane directs her symmetrical and suspenseful plot with a dexterous hand. Staging a drama of revelation, she plants hints to prepare for Leda's arrival and plays agilely with her characters' distorted perspectives. Keane proved herself a master of unreliable narration in *Good Behaviour*, letting deluded Aroon tell the story, at the same time betraying to us the true, even sadder, tale of her family's fate. This time Keane multiplies the myopia and shifts, artfully and comically, from one solipsistic Swift to the next: one-eyed Jasper, armed with spite against his sisters; April, who can't hear anything and has eyes only for her own beauty; officious May with a shriveled hand, who credits her every bustle with highest importance; and Baby June, simpleminded ally of Durraghglass's livestock and land. Keane's feat is not only to make us correct for their skewed vision but also, improbably enough, to prompt us to care about their cantankerous views and fates. The brittle caricatures are still capable of surprising themselves, Keane convinces us—and curiosity thus roused can lead unexpectedly near to sympathy.

Keane depends on curiosity to spin out her old-fashioned fiction. So does cousin Leda to ensnare the Swifts. In fact, Keane seems to mirror in Leda the manipulative imagination that is at work in her own art. When Leda arrives halfway through the novel, hers becomes the crucial perspective, as she sets the Swifts against one another and treacherously teases out their secrets. "In May's bedroom there was no drink, only a long hour of listening and waiting for some hint or confidence that could be a little dangerous, provoking curiosity or excitement," begins one of Keane's glimpses of Leda's plotting mind in action. "Leda might have been wanting to write a book about her cousins, but all she wished for was a power over each against each, and to steal even the secrets they didn't know they kept."

COMING:
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Despite her insinuating gifts, Leda couldn't write a book about the Swifts if she wanted to—and in fact even fails to enthrall them in the end. A genius at manipulation, she, unlike Keane, has no inkling of the moral imagination that must complement and complicate it: she knows all about the possibilities of power, but not about the limitations of knowledge. Keane, however, is an expert on delusion, which tends to triumph in her fiction—usually for the best in the darkly comic world she creates. At the close of *Time After Time*, it's all-knowing Leda who is trapped, and the blinkered Swifts who are enlightened—but only a little, just enough to exert their waning powers in purposeful, instead of perverse, directions.

THE WORLD of *Stones for Ibarra*, by contrast, is quietly tragic. Harriet Doerr's novel is a fateful tale rather than a drama of revelation: the trick time plays does not come as a surprise at all. Unlike the Swifts, who are taken aback by the appearance of their cousin from out of the distant past, Sara Everton knows from the outset that she will lose her husband Richard in the near future—in six years, predicts the doctor who diagnoses his leukemia soon after the American couple arrives in Mexico. They come to the village of Ibarra from San Francisco, full of visions of forging a new life for themselves and of resurrecting old ways at the same time.

Their plan is to reopen the copper mine once owned and operated by Richard's grandfather, "to extend the family's Mexican history and patch the present onto the past. . . . To weave chance and hope into a fabric that would clothe them as long as they lived." That proves to be a far more difficult project than they expect. Their sense of the past they come to reclaim is more misleading than inspiring at the start: "They have not considered that memories are like corks left out of bottles. They swell. They no longer fit." Barely a trace remains of the romantic family house they've envisioned, or of the busy mine. Instead, the present they encounter is daunting; the villagers watch them silently and constantly, hovering at their windows to peer in at the only foreigners in those remote parts. "We have come to live among specters, Sara tells herself. . . . They will never speak to me, she thinks, I will never know their names." And the share of hope and chance meted out to the two of them for the future turns out to be meager.

"At last the village found a word that applied to the North Americans. It was a long word, *mediodesorientado*, half-disoriented"—hardly the state Sara and Richard aspired to in making their permanent pilgrimage to Mexico. The central story Doerr tells, weaving it in among exotic tales of Ibarra's inhabitants, is of Sara's gradual awakening to the reigning fact in her own life as well as in the villagers' view of the world: the power of fate. "Believing as they did in a relentless providence, the people of Ibarra, daily and without surprise, met their individual dooms." Confronted by an oblique but obsessive "companionship with death" in Ibarra, Sara's world acquires new weight, and her own will becomes wiser.

Doerr writes in the simple, careful cadences of an oral storyteller, intent on making her listeners follow closely as the story unfolds but also on reminding them at every turn where it is leading—as if she were only the bearer of a preordained tale. Each of the eighteen chapters stands as an essentially self-contained episode (some of them apparently began as short stories), with only the sparest of apparent connections to the ones before or after. Some center on the Evertons, whose life together remains unexpectedly but effectively mysterious; others focus on Ibarra's inhabitants, whose strange and violent sagas we hear in full. Within each chapter, Doerr works in short, sequential sections—rarely more than a page, sometimes only a paragraph—which move the stories forward scene by carefully crafted scene. What links the novel's many parts, unobtrusively but ineluctably, is the progress of time, which is carrying us, as the narrator often notes, ever closer to Richard's death.

It is that progress with which Sara's will and imagination must come to terms. Like Keane, Doerr projects onto her character some of her own imaginative style—poetically inventive in this case, rather than manipulative. In a narrative twist early in the novel, Sara herself is credited with a role in creating the Ibarrian tales that fill the book.

> . . . of [the villagers'] raptures and their furies she understood almost nothing until she learned enough Spanish, first to grasp phrases, and then whole sentences of the individual histories related to her. . . . Sara had to fill in. When complete these were accounts half heard and half invented.

For a time the tales seem simply to transport her, and us, into the villagers' alien world. But midway through the novel it suddenly becomes clear that lurking in Sara's vivid extrapolations of others' pasts—"on her way home Sara sketched in new outlines and filled the spaces with primary colors"—is a fierce desire to evade all visions of her own future, to persevere instead with "the act of will she herself daily performed on Richard's behalf." There comes a turning point, however, when Sara abruptly

> confronted and stripped off illusion. . . . And, together with one fantasy, she renounced another. . . . Standing here at noon on the long covered porch, with her lists of double negatives and dependent clauses, she relinquished her right to have her way. None of it would happen as she had willed it. The magic pill would not be found. Richard would not recover.

Recognizing the limitations of her own power, Sara acknowledges new possibilities of knowledge. In spite of herself, she slowly begins to admit some solacing wisdom in the villagers' superstitions, in the buttons and thorns they hide for good luck, the stones they pile to commemorate bad. They are metaphoric tributes to the trials of life and death, which are what Harriet Doerr, too, offers in understated abundance in her accomplished novel.

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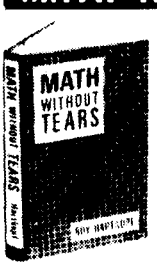

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TRB, *from page 4*

between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev at the U.S. exhibition in Moscow. (Robinson worked for the Eisenhower Administration. Safire represented the kitchen equipment manufacturer.) Later, they were partners in a public relations business.

When I said to Robinson, "You're aware that people are saying you're the leaker," he replied: "I was not aware, but it's not the case." Later, forgetting he'd said he wasn't even aware of these rumors, he complained of the burden of unjust suspicion: "I have friends who came up to me the first day and said, 'Ha ha ha'—they knew it was me. . . ." So Safire's friend Gilbert Robinson panicked and told me a fib.

The greatest sinner in this episode, though, is neither Wick nor Robinson but William Safire. Safire writes, "Secret taping is wrong—unethical—because it erodes trust and engenders suspicion, thereby reducing human communication." True enough. But all Wick did was to record these conversations for his own use. It is Safire who is publishing them in *The New York Times*.

What contributes more to an atmosphere of distrust and paranoia: the possibility that conversations may be taped by people who are already privy to them, or the possibility that confidential information—taped or otherwise—will be leaked to the newspapers? Yet when it comes to leaks, Safire expresses less than zero concern about eroding trust and engendering suspicion. In a column on December 18, the week before the Wick circus began, he invited federal employees to mail "evidence of . . . surreptitious taping to their local right-wing columnist," meaning him. After the story broke, he bragged about his "help-wanted ad" and predicted with glee that the leaker(s) "are surely not finished yet." The process Safire has set in motion guarantees that all of Wick's transcripts will be distributed to various investigating bodies, where many more of them will become public.

And if an angel dies every time a lie is told, you can be sure that Safire's source, whoever that may be, has killed more angels over the past few weeks than Charlie Wick killed in his feeble cover-up attempt. Or does lying to cover up leaking not count?

Safire subscribes to an "invisible hand" theory of leaks. "The proper way" to maintain confidentiality, he writes, "is to stop the leak at the source. That requires the people at the top to keep their mouths shut when secrecy serves the public interest." Once leaked upon, the journalist needn't consider whether secrecy serves the public interest. It's a game: one side tries to keep people's mouths shut, the other side tries to pry them open, and an invisible hand presumably assures the right outcome.

In reality there's no such assurance. The fact of Wick's taping is a legitimate, though overplayed, news story. But if Bill Safire is so all-fired concerned about the privacy of people Wick talked to on the telephone, what public interest is served by publishing these conversations? Here the story gets ugly. Safire has been implying that the transcripts reveal serious misconduct, apart from the taping, although the transcripts he's published so far (I write on January 10) reveal nothing even suspicious.

The published transcripts concern a meeting Wick wanted to arrange between President Reagan and several media executives. Wick was hoping to raise private money in conjunction with "Project Democracy," an Administration program to promote democratic values around the world. Wick mentioned in a phone call to White House Chief of Staff James A. Baker that the meeting might also be useful to Reagan's reelection: "if you are interested in '84 in addition to doing what we are trying to do, can you imagine a better group of guys?" Wick signed off, idiotically, "We will win in '84." ("Mr. Baker: 'Goodbye.' ") In another conversation with an aide, Wick referred to having raised "other money."

From these sparse threads, Safire spins a web of innuendo. "What 'other money'?" he leers. "Transcripts . . . show he was planning to raise large sums from foreign and domestic media fatcats, using as bait a personal audience in the White House." Safire speculates about "some top-secret purpose . . . in connection with 'Project Democracy.' " And he charges that "the President's crony gathered the media bigwigs with Mr. Reagan's 1984 campaign clearly in mind."

So what? In a column back in January 1983, Safire had high praise for Project Democracy (with a special tribute to his pal, Gilbert Robinson). If he now thinks there's something wrong with raising private funds to serve this goal, he hasn't said what it is. And if he suspects that Wick actually was raising money for some other "top-secret" purpose, he hasn't said why. Does Safire seriously think it's heinous to flatter useful people by inviting them to the White House? Or for a Presidential aide to think about politics as well as policy? If he does, he should say so, and suffer the apposite guffaws. As for the ominous "other money," Safire knows perfectly well that Wick has raised money for a variety of legitimate purposes, including the Reagan inauguration.

And yet, Safire's apparently baseless innuendos have now spread. *The Washington Post* has editorialized about "cryptic but eyebrow-raising references to raising political money." Syndicated columnist Mary McGrory called the Baker transcript "a murky but potentially explosive exchange" which "suggests that Wick may have confused his 'mission' of telling the truth about America with a mission to reelect Ronald Reagan."

Maybe these people know something I don't. One theory around town is that Safire has got other goods on Wick and is dribbling out the evidence Chinese-water-torture-style for better effect. Or, a related theory, he suspects further wrongdoing and hopes, by keeping the heat on, to smoke out some solid evidence. Neither theory flatters Safire's self-image as a demon for fair play and individual rights. Nor, of course, does the theory that Safire is avenging his shafted crony (a Safire word).

A more flattering theory is that Safire has never lost his sense of outrage at having been one of the Nixon aides whose phones were tapped at the request of Henry Kissinger. Perhaps. But Safire's outrage did not prevent him from attending Kissinger's gala sixtieth birthday party a while back. If Safire is really still mad about being bugged, why is he partying with the bugger and persecuting a man who only bugged himself?

My own theory is that Safire is simply a good P.R. man. He knows how to hype a story and keep it hyped. He knows it's good for his image to keep people guessing by attacking the Republican Administration every now and then. An apparent obsession with civil liberties also puts a nice spin on the ball. But whatever his motive, he is misusing the power of his august office as a columnist for the nation's leading newspaper. He's behaving, not like a civil libertarian, but like a bully.

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LOUISIANA DIARIST

Killing Folks

THE LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY sprawls for eighteen thousand acres along a remote bend of the Mississippi River. On the night of December 13, I joined about a hundred other reporters there to cover the state's first execution in twenty-two years. After being searched at the gate—where dozens of helmeted armed guards stood watch over the handful of protestors praying outside—we were herded into a makeshift press room in an administration building several miles inside the complex. A few miles farther on, 31-year-old Robert Wayne Williams waited quietly, in a cement-block house one hundred feet from the electric chair that would take his life. Most of us had written our stories before we arrived, leaving blanks ("His body twitched . . . get details"; "He was pronounced dead at . . . get time") that could be quickly filled in after the event. The busiest person that evening was a Department of Corrections press officer named Martha Jumonville, a cheerful, grandmotherly woman who dispensed coffee, sandwiches, and numerous copies of Regulation 10-25: "Procedures for the execution of the death penalty," an exhaustive how-to guide to electrocution procedures. It explains when to do it ("between 12:00 midnight and 1:00 A.M., barring unforeseen delays"), who gets to examine the chair the day before (it's "off-limits to unauthorized inmates and employees from 8:00 A.M."), and who is allowed to watch. The privileged few include at least "three members of the news media," whose names are chosen by lottery and who then report back to the press pool.

IN 1979, ROBERT WAYNE WILLIAMS killed a 67-year-old security guard named Willy Kelly with a shotgun blast to the face. It was his first violent crime. Williams was an eleventh-grade dropout whose life had recently begun to unravel: he had lost his job, become addicted to heroin, and was fighting with his 17-year-old wife. She found him one night at a party, drunk and stoned, and told him to get in the car with her and her uncle, Ralph Holmes. They handed him a sawed-off shotgun and told him they were planning to rob an A&P store. Williams held the shotgun on Kelly while Holmes tried to remove the guard's pistol. When Kelly reached down to unbuckle the strap, Williams screamed, "Don't do it!" and the gun went off. Williams claimed until his death that the gun discharged accidentally. It is possible. Prosecution witnesses admitted that the gun was missing its firing pin and had discharged accidentally later in the robbery. Williams's wife turned state's evidence and was released. Holmes got life. Williams got death.

THE STRANGE THING about an execution is that nobody actually seems to do the killing. Was Robert Wayne Williams killed by the jury that convicted him? Or by the judge who sentenced him? Or by the governor who signed the death warrant? I still don't know. In the penitentiary press room, I found myself angered by the cool tidiness of it all, by the way the democratic process makes murder acceptable if it is carried out late at night, behind closed doors, according to state regulation. As the evening dragged on, reporters continued to fret about their deadlines, play cards, and place bets on the outcome of the last Supreme Court appeal. When a lawyer for the A.C.L.U. was delayed in getting to Washington, and Governor Treen issued a one-hour reprieve, reporters groaned and a night editor at *The Times-Picayune* uttered an exasperated "Oh, horseshit!" But finally at 1:06 A.M. an electrical charge "sufficient in intensity and duration to cause death" (as Regulation 10-25 stipulates) was passed through Williams's body. The witnesses returned, provided us with the details we needed, and we filed our stories. Martha Jumonville told us how pleased she was that everything went so smoothly, and urged us to get in touch if we needed to know about future executions.

IN THE NEXT DAY'S headlines Williams was featured as the "convicted killer" or the "condemned murderer." But the funeral several days later focused on a different Williams: Robert Wayne Williams the Christian convert. As three hundred mourners jammed into his church, the Reverend J. D. Brown recalled the events leading up to Williams's conversion: "Robert saw himself forever banished in hell for the crime he committed. He felt the horror of seeing his hands bloodstained." Williams's mother is the assistant pastor in Brown's church, and Brown was a frequent visitor to the parish prison cell where Williams awaited trial. Brown reminded him that other men had recoiled when faced with their own crimes, too, including King David, who killed his mistress's husband. Brown told Williams to study Psalm 51, to pray, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, Oh God." Shortly thereafter Williams asked to be baptized, and he lived out his last four and a half years on Death Row a born-again Christian. Brown recounted that as Williams walked with him to the electric chair, he said, "Tell those I smoked dope with, those I drank with, those I whoremongered around with, that if they don't accept Jesus my dying will be in vain." The small church rocked with the sobs and groans of his family.

THE TRUTH ABOUT Robert Wayne Williams is that he was in the end both a murderer and a faithful Christian, a penitent who had once committed an atrocity. The Louisiana public, however—incensed about violent crime—had no patience for ambivalent moral truths. The editorial page of *The Times-Picayune* was full of letters from readers outraged that the paper had chosen to cover the funeral. One expressed the hope that "these poor criminals live in fear of the death penalty . . . [that] they can't sleep, eat, or walk because of it"; another called for more "Dirty Harry" justice that "brooks no nonsense." In Louisiana, opposition to the death penalty is often viewed as coddling criminals at the expense of their victims. But Willy Kelly's 76-year-old cousin, Mattie Chin, doesn't see it that way. "Willy was going about his own business, and wasn't hurting nobody," she said, "and that man shot him in the face. I haven't gotten over it yet." She crossed her arms and stared out the window. "But killing that man ain't going to bring Willy back. Need to do something about all these people killing folks," she said. "Need to get these people straightened out."

JASON DEPARLE

Jason DeParle, a former TNR staff writer, is a reporter at the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*.

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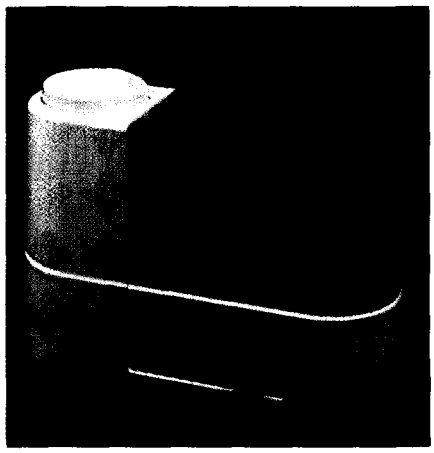
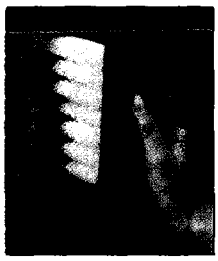


Indoor air quality can get abysmally low — especially in offices, rooms where people are smoking, houses buttoned up tight for the winter, stuffy overheated city apartments. Here are two newly developed tools that do a bang-up job of improving indoor air — and along with it your comfort, your health and your mood. Tool #1 (shown right) takes out of the air all the things you *don't* want: dust, cigarette smoke, soot, pollen, animal dander, 99% of all particulate pollutants. The Bionaire 500 air cleaner scrubs 45 cubic feet of air per minute, the average room three times an hour. The unit includes switchable ion generator and fragrance dispenser. Tool #2 (shown above) puts back into the air the one thing you *do* want — moisture. Low household humidity correlates with a higher incidence of winter colds and respiratory infections. The Douglas humidifier uses ultrasound to break water particles into a mist so fine it diffuses through a 1500 sq. ft. area. Operation is virtually silent, the unit holds one gallon of water, is easily filled at any sink and the cold steam is perfectly safe. It is also ultra-portable — measures only 15″ x 6″ x 12″, weighs under 8 lbs. and can be situated almost anywhere. The ultrasonic humidifier costs **$139.00** ($10.95) #A887. The model 500 air cleaner costs **$125.00** ($9.95) #A822. A larger model 1000 is also available (3 speeds, 118 CFM cleaning capacity) for **$275.00** ($12.95) #A823. All units are UL-listed. See how your houseplants thrive with these air improvers at work and you'll get some idea of the benefits the humans in your household are receiving.

7-FINGERED BLIND CLEANER



It has taken a long time figuring out how to clean venetian blinds efficiently. Now a California designer has finally solved the problem convincingly with this blind cleaner that saves up to 80% of your cleaning time! This tool has 7 roller fingers, 4″ long and covered with a synthetic lambswool that picks up and holds dust and dirt. Pull the trigger and the fingers spread enough to slip over the blind slats (6 mini-blind slats or 3 conventional slats). Release the trigger and the slats are held firmly between the cleaning rollers. Then move the cleaner back and forth along the blind, release and grip the next set of slats. When soiled, the rollers can be removed and washed. These revolutionary blind cleaning tools cost **$9.00** ($1.95) #A787.

WATERING WHIZ

Now you can water all your plants in a single trip with this handy indoor garden hose. This 50′ vinyl hose comes with a set of four adaptors that readily attach to most indoor and outdoor faucets. From there you just take the water where you want it — an easy-control handle allows you to turn a splashless stream of water on and off as needed. There's a snap-in misting attachment, so after you water the roots you can spray the foliage. The kit costs **$11.00** ($1.95) #A681. Two for **$19.00** ($2.95) #A6812.

DUST-MAGNETS™

The lambswool duster has long been a useful, durable and superior household tool. We can send you a group of four lambswool dusters for the fantastic low price of **$16.00** ($2.95) #A783. Buying the group saves you $9.90, it's almost like getting one duster free! The group consists of our standard 27″ long duster, a bent-handled model for hard to reach shelves and two mini-dusters for dusting delicate items. On its own lambswool actually attracts and holds dust like a magnet. We also offer the dusters individually: standard 27″ for **$7.00** ($1.95) #A780, bent-handled for **$8.00** ($1.95) #A781 or two mini-dusters for **$8.00** ($1.95) #A794.

GIVING DUST THE BRUSH

Saving energy means paying attention to the small things around the house — like the refrigerator coils. Once these coils become coated with dust, the efficiency of your refrigerator drops dramatically. Simply cleaning the coils — and keeping them clean — can reduce your refrigerator's electric consumption as much as 10%. This brush, angled and with tapered bristles, is designed to clean deep in the coils where vacuum cleaners and dust cloths won't reach. It is a full 27″ long with 12″ of bristles and a sturdy 15″ wooden handle. It costs only **$8.00** ($1.95) #A427.

*ORDERING INSTRUCTIONS AND GUARANTEE: We ship via United Parcel Service wherever possible to insure prompt delivery. The price of each item is shown followed by its shipping and handling charges in ( ). Be sure to add the item price **plus** shipping and handling charges for each item ordered to arrive at the **total price** of each item. If you are not satisfied for any reason, return the article to us within 30 days, and we'll exchange it or refund the cost, per your instructions.*

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